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THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

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THE OTHER SIDE OF

GREATNESS

AND OTHER SERMONS

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TO MY OWN PEOPLE AT WEST CALDER AND AT
FERRYHILL AND TO THE PEOPLE OF POLLOK-
SHIELDS WEST UNITED FREE CHURCH WHO
WERE AS KIND TO ME AS THOUGH THEY WERE
MY OWN PEOPLE



CONTENTS

I

POVERTY OF SPIRIT THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS	PAGE I
Matthew v. 3.	

II

THE ALTERNATIVES	18
Matthew xxvii. 42.	

III

ENLARGEMENT OF HEART	35
Isaiah lx. 5.	

IV

THINGS WHICH ARE OF REAL WORTH	52
Galatians vi. 15 ; v. 6 ; 1 Corinthians vii. 19.	

V

THE TENDERNESS OF GOD	68
Jeremiah iii. 19.	

VI

CHRISTIAN GLADNESS	85
John xx. 20.	

VII

THE UNFOLDING OF FAITH	102
2 Peter i. 5-7.	

VIII

BUNDLES OF BENEFITS	119
Psalm ciii. 2-5, vii	

IX

	PAGE
THE GROUND OF FEARLESSNESS . . .	136
Revelation i. 17-18.	

X

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE RISEN LORD . . .	153
John xxi.	

XI

NO CONDEMNATION—NO SEPARATION . . .	170
Romans viii. 1, 38, 39.	

XII

A PERFECT LIFE	186
John xix. 30.	

XIII

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK . . .	203
Mark vii. 34.	

XIV

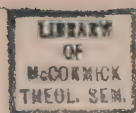
EYES HOLDEN AND EYES OPENED . . .	220
Luke xxiv. 16, 31.	

XV

THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST . . .	237
2 Corinthians v. 14.	

XVI

THE WISDOM WHICH IS RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFI- CATION, AND REDEMPTION.	253
1 Corinthians i. 30.	



I

POVERTY OF SPIRIT THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 3.

IT seems a plain and simple text, and the meaning appears to be evident. The words are common, and are in use every day. All people have an idea of the meaning of poverty, of spirit, of a kingdom, and of heaven. Yet there is no text the meaning of which has been so misunderstood, and has been so perverted, as has happened with the text before us. By writers on ethics it has been read to mean that Christianity is in possession only of the passive virtues, that it has no claim to the virtues of manliness, of strength, of self-realisation. Poverty of spirit has been rendered "poor-spiritedness." It is forgotten by these writers that the Christian ideal is set forth in the figure of Him "who went about doing good," and that the active principle of the Christian life is love. Not suppression of faculty,

2 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

but consecration of it, is the Christian ideal. That also is a theme which can be demonstrated from the Sermon on the Mount.

Dealing more closely with our text, we desire to show that poverty of spirit is the other side of greatness, that only he who has discerned the ideal can feel what is described in the text as poverty of spirit. The man contented with himself, satisfied with his work and his position, to whom no ideal opens itself as something yet unattained, can never feel poverty of spirit. In short, it seems to me that this foundation beatitude, on which all the other beatitudes are built up, sets forth a universal law of human life, that it describes the attitude of mind characteristic of the wisest, strongest, best of the human family. The greater a man is in any walk of life the wider his vision, and the keener his insight the greater is his poverty of spirit in the presence of the perfection he has seen.

“So doth the greater glory dim the less.
A substitute shines brightly as a king
Until a king be by; and then his state
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
Into the main of waters.”

The vision of the greater glory, and the contrast between what he has seen and what he has in possession, makes the man full of poverty of spirit.

The stars shine as brightly during the daylight as they do at night, but they are invisible because of the greater glory of the sun. One can be content with his present state only when he has seen no brighter, clearer vision.

Illustrations of this truth crowd on us, and the difficulty is to make a selection of them. Let us take our first illustration from the Bible. "When the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit left in her" (1 Kings x. 4, 5). But the Queen of Sheba had a state of her own, for "she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones" (1 Kings x. 2). There was no more spirit left in her, just because she had the greatness to discern how much the state of Solomon excelled her own. If she had not had that discernment, she might have thought Sheba equal to Jerusalem, and her own wisdom as great as that of Solomon. But she was able to appreciate the higher when she saw it, and there was no more spirit left in her.

↳ Sir Walter Scott records that he had met emperors,

kings, statesmen, and many others of the ruling class, and had felt no perturbation of spirit, but one day he met the Duke of Wellington, and he felt as if he could sink into the ground. So great was the reverence of the man of letters for the man of action. Yet Scott was by far the greater man of the two. Cardinal Newman records in his *Apologia* that when he was elected a Fellow of Oriel, and when the Fellows welcomed him in the Common Room, he was unmoved until John Keble shook hands with him, and he felt utterly abashed, so great was the reverence of Newman for the saintliness of John Keble. Readers of Morley's *Life of Gladstone* will readily find many illustrations of our text. For example, in the words of Gladstone regarding Dante, and the words used by Darwin when he told of a visit from Gladstone. "Why, he sat on that chair and talked away like you or me." So spake the greatest man of science of the nineteenth century. He whose thoughts and words were shaking the world spake of the statesman, and his words record his poverty of spirit in the presence of the great ruler of men. The reverence of the man of letters for the man of action, the reverence of the statesman for the poet, the reverence of the man of science for the statesman, the reverence of the theologian for the saint, indicate the greatness of those who can reverence

and admire, and at the same time indicate their poverty of spirit and the blessedness which is inherent in poverty of spirit.

The thesis may be worked out in detail. Take the man of science in the presence of the majesty of nature. Take the words of Sir Isaac Newton, the first man who enabled all men to think of the universe as a unity, and who in the presence of the universe spoke as follows, a short time before his death: "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." Testimonies of a similar import could be cited from scientific men, and especially from those whose discoveries form the highest glory of scientific thought. They tell us that they know so little, that the processes of nature are at once so simple and complex, that their descriptive science can only set forth aspects of nature. They describe the ongoing of nature from particular points of view, and in so doing neglect every aspect save one. They describe from the point of view of physics, of chemistry, of biology, or from that point of view in which they are most interested, and they neglect the others. Even in

6 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

physics they have to make abstractions and deal only with heat, electricity, or with other aspects; and yet they know that all these activities are there at the same time. Nature carries on all the scientific methods at one and the same time, and the masters of science know this well.

Every living thing, in its vital processes, exhausts all the processes of descriptive science, and it is at one and the same time illustrating the methods of physics, chemistry, and biology. Scientific men, just in proportion to their greatness, and just in proportion to the greatness of their vision into the wholeness of nature, are filled with poverty of spirit in the presence of the magnificence of nature and the littleness of science. They can proceed only by attending to one aspect at a time, and they know that in the concrete, actual world all the processes are going on at the same time. How the wisest of them long for a power of vision that would enable them to see what is taking place and going on in the world at any moment of time! But the majestic process of nature has to be broken up into the smaller unities which are within the reach of the human mind. But only to the man who knows how far from reality is his own vision is there the blessedness of the fleeting glimpse into reality.

Look at the same thing from the point of view of

art. Let the greatest artist be asked what he thinks of his rendering of a human face, and he will tell you that while he has painted the features truly, and has given the character of the man as he was able to read it, yet the manifoldness of the human character, its subtle variety and its thousand moods, can never be placed on canvas. Or can the landscape painter ever catch the infinite variety of Nature? Can he imitate the sunsets which are painted by nature every evening? He may paint what may appear to a sympathetic eye to suggest the colours of the sunset, but how far is that from the reality. Or who can paint the varied colours of a breaking wave? It is the best painters who know what they have accomplished, and who know how much they have come short of what they meant to do, and how far short they are of fully representing the great reality.

If it be so with the science and art of man in presence of the magnificence of nature, it is so with man in the presence of the greatest of man's works. It was a lesson in the meaning of our text to observe the reverence of men of science at the meeting of the Physical Section of the British Association towards Sir Gabriel Stokes, though there were present such men as Lord Kelvin and Lord Rayleigh. To them, as to the lesser men present, Sir Gabriel was the ideal man of science, and they felt poverty of spirit in his

presence. The greater the physicist, the more was his reverence for that eminent man. So it is in all departments of human effort. Men of science, whether their sphere of work be physics, chemistry, or biology, feel poverty of spirit as they think of the great men who widened the horizons of our knowledge, and placed within the power of other men the instruments and the thoughts which have led to man's mastery over Nature. One has only to read a history of science and philosophy, and to note the attitude of the historian as he toils to represent adequately what the masters have contributed to the sum of human achievement, to observe first their reverence for the men and their work, and secondly their own poverty of spirit. It is to be said, also, that this poverty of spirit is felt most deeply by the men who, almost of equal stature with the masters, can appreciate what the world owes to them. Nor is it necessary to limit our illustrations to the worlds of science, philosophy, or art. The highest and the best never reach their own ideal, and they alone know what vision of perfection floated before them as they strove to realise it.

It is the men of highest capacity and of greatest achievement who can appreciate what has been done by others. The poets of the world are most enthusiastic when they speak of Homer, of Virgil, of Dante,

and of Shakespeare. It is the musicians of the world who can alone appreciate the great masters of music. And only the singers can measure the greatness of the masters of song. The greater the capacity of appreciation the greater is their reverence for the work done, and the greater also is their own poverty of spirit in the presence of the great achievements of the human spirit, and specially in the presence of the magnificence of Nature.

We have spoken of the intellectual spheres of man's endeavour, the presence of poverty of spirit is still more manifest in the moral sphere. Here, too, the contrast between the ideal and the real, between what ought to be and what is, is still more striking. Everyone has an ideal of conduct, everyone knows more or less what he ought to be, and yet everyone feels that his conduct is not ideal. "I see and approve the better things, I follow the worse," is an old saying, and universal experience attests the truth of it. "The good that I would, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do." Here we come across the feeling of demerit, the sense of unworthiness and of sin, which is a deeper form of poverty of spirit. For it has in it the feeling of blameworthiness, the sense of ill-desert. The consciousness that it might have been otherwise, that we might have acted in a worthier way, or at least might not have acted

unworthily, leads on to the feeling of regret, remorse, and repentance. To have seen the ideal of conduct, to have recognised its binding force, and to feel that one has acted contrary to its plain behests, is the form which poverty of spirit takes in the presence of the ideal of moral goodness somehow revealed to us. The revelation of moral goodness may be made manifest to us through our experience of good men whom we have met, it may be revealed to us by our becoming acquainted with the great figures of moral goodness recorded for us in literature or in history, but come the revelation whence it may, it commends itself to us as a pattern to be imitated, as a type of conduct which we are bound to follow. Men have never been slow to recognise the worth of moral goodness, or to acknowledge it and to find it worthy. It is not here that the difficulty lies, it is in the powerlessness of man to follow and to realise in practical forms what he has seen to be desirable and worthy. To enter fully into this line of thought would lead us too far afield, nor is it necessary for our purpose, which is to show that the recognition of the ideal of moral goodness and the difficulty of realising it in practice is one of the causes of the state of mind which we call poverty of spirit.

But the feeling of poverty of spirit is most conspicuous in the religious sphere. To this all religious

experience bears witness. It is not necessary to travel far in order to illustrate this truth. Illustrations might be drawn from the ethnic religions, and from all religions which have appeared among men. For all peoples have had some vision of the perfection of the Power on which they felt their dependence. But as all the religious experience of the race has found its most complete expression in that body of literature which we call the Bible, it will suffice to take our illustrations from it. All the elements of religious experience are in the Bible, and it is a record of religious experience of the most intense kind. So if we follow the experience recorded in the Scriptures, we shall find that the deepest form of poverty of spirit is found whenever men obtained the vision of God. Take the story as it is told in the Bible, take it in its order as we have it recorded, and we shall find from the beginning to the end of the story that reverence and awe combined with poverty of spirit are the outcome of the vision of God. Not to multiply examples, take the story of the making of a prophet, which is also the story of the making of a man, as it is set forth in the 6th of Isaiah. There the story is told of how the prophet saw the vision of God, and heard the song of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory," and having seen the

vision and understood its meaning, instantly there came to him the sense of the contrast between the magnificence of God and his own littleness, between the glory of God and his own unworth, and between the holiness of God and his own impurity, and he is constrained to say, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The first effect of the vision of God, and the most permanent fruit of it, is precisely this feeling of unworthiness, this sense of defect. But the sense of unworthiness is just the measure of the greatness of the human spirit who feels it. It was the princely Isaiah who had the vision, and in the course of his prophetic activity set it forth with unprecedented fulness, and whose greatness has been recognised by all succeeding generations, who also felt the deepest feeling of dependence and poverty in the presence of the Divine. Or take the feeling expressed in the Book of Job, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Not to multiply examples, read the story of the call of Jeremiah, or of Ezekiel, and of the way in which the burden of the prophetic office was laid on them, and you will find additional illustrations of the truth of our text. Read the call of Peter at the Galilean

lake, and listen to his impassioned outcry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," study the vision which Paul saw on the way to Damascus, and you will find how the seeing of the vision of God and the apprehension of His glory and of His holiness wrought in Paul and in Peter the feeling of their own insufficiency, of their poverty of spirit. Or consider the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation and the effect of the vision which John saw, being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. It is not necessary to write the whole details of the vision, but their effect on John was. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead." Though John had known the Lord during the years of His earthly life, though he had been nearer to Him than any other, though he had leaned on His breast and had been the beloved disciple, yet when he saw the ascended Lord he fell at His feet as dead. Thus the vision of God, or the vision of the risen Lord, the vision of glory and holiness, makes the man who sees the vision feel his lowliness, fills him with humility, and causes him to realise his poverty of spirit.

I might give other illustrations drawn from the great religious spirit of the Christian Church. I might quote from the works of Athanasius, from the Confessions of Augustine, from the Institutes of Calvin, from the writings of Jonathan Edwards,

from the works of Thomas Chalmers, and from many others. I might set forth the mingled rapture and deep humility with which these men described the vision of God which they had been privileged to see. The clearer their vision of God was, the deeper was their humility. One and all of them would echo the words of the Apostle Paul, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen."

Thus we have found the attitude of poverty of spirit to be the characteristic of greatness in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual spheres of man's activity. Let us try now to see the connection between the feeling of poverty of spirit and the blessedness of the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord elsewhere says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and again, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." A man may therefore be within sight of the kingdom of

heaven and may not be able to discern it, nor recognise it to be the kingdom of heaven. He cannot see it nor enter into it. He lacks the power to recognise it though it is near him. That is to say, that a man is within the kingdom of heaven when he is able to discern it as such. As in the Westminster Larger Catechism it is asked, "May one who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation, come to the Lord's Supper?" and it is answered, "One who doubteth of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; and in God's account hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it, and unfeignedly desire to be found in Christ, and to depart from iniquity: in which case (because promises are made, and this sacrament is appointed for the relief even of weak and doubting Christians) he is to bewail his unbelief, and labour to have his doubts resolved; and, so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened." This is quoted for the sake of the important principle stated in it. "In God's account he hath it, if he be duly affected with the apprehension of the want of it." If a man is without the kingdom of heaven, he is in no way concerned with the thought of it. If he is

concerned with it, he is already within it. The kingdom of heaven is very wide. It contains within itself all the ideals which attract man; it is at once intellectual, moral, and spiritual, and in some sense all who have true ideals are within the kingdom of heaven. Especially is this true in the spiritual sphere, and true of all who have seen the vision of God.

But the vision of God begets poverty of spirit; indeed, the trueness of the vision is measured by the consequent poverty of spirit. This is the note that seals the possession of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this is the keynote of all our Lord's teaching. It is the note of His own life. It is expressly what He says of Himself: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is what He teaches by His example. For He ever watched the Father's hand. He spoke the Father's words, He did the Father's works, and all He thought, felt, and did were done in obedience to the Father. He emptied Himself. At every fresh departure in His work He spent the night in prayer and fellowship with the Father, and whenever He needed wisdom and power for His life-work He sought these from the Father. Thus in virtue of His poverty of spirit He was in possession of the kingdom of heaven.

So also in His direct teaching of His disciples, whether in the Sermon on the Mount, or in parable, or in action, He ever taught that those who felt their poverty of spirit were in possession of the kingdom of heaven. What else was the meaning of His action when He placed the little child in the midst and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"? What else was the meaning of His action when He girded Himself with a towel and washed the feet of the disciples? So by life, speech, and action He set forth the central principle of the kingdom of heaven, which is also the central principle of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Apostle Paul frequently lays stress on this feature of the person and work of Christ. "For even Christ pleased not himself." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." "Having this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, even the death of the cross."

II

THE ALTERNATIVES

“He saved others ; he cannot save himself.”—MATT. xxvii. 42.

THESE are true words, but they were spoken by men who did not know how true they were. They describe the situation with exactness. Because He was to save others, He could not save Himself. For this end came Jesus into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. He came to seek and to save the lost, and to save the lost He must take their place. Such is the truth set forth in the Gospel story, and the chief priests, scribes, and elders expressed it in their own way.

There is an air of relief in the words they spoke. They were not sure until now that He would not save Himself. They knew that He had unusual power at His command. They were not ignorant of the life which Jesus had lived, and of the works which He had done during these recent years. They

took care to keep themselves informed regarding what He said and what He did. They knew of His work in Galilee, for they had sent emissaries to inquire and report; they knew of His healing of the sick, of His feeding of the multitudes, of His raising of the dead, of His command to the winds and waves, and their obedience. Yea, in these last days, within reach of Jerusalem itself, they had learned of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. They also knew of the cleansing of the temple, and of the words He had spoken within the last few days, words of rebuke and of condemnation of themselves and their ways. All these words and works of His had so disturbed them that it quickened in them the stern resolve to make an end of Him and His influence. They had succeeded so far. He had been arrested, tried, condemned, and was hanging on the cross.

But the anxiety and perturbation of mind of the chief priests, elders, and scribes were not yet at an end. They knew that He had power at His call. Of this they were convinced, for had He not often exerted it, but always for the help of others? He had saved others, will He save Himself? So the day wore on, and they watched Him on the cross, and waited through the slowly moving hours. What if He should save Himself! What if He should put forth that mysterious power He had formerly used,

set free hands and feet from the nails, and come down from the cross, and cover all His adversaries with shame and confusion! The anxiety was very real, and the torment of suspense was great. What they could not understand at all was the possibility of one having power and never using it for Himself. This to them was inconceivable. That a man should have the power, and allow fetters to be fastened on Him, a robe of scorn to be cast on Him, nails to be driven into hands and feet, and all the horrors of the day to be heaped on His head, this they could not understand. Will He save Himself? So they waited and watched, and as the day wore on, they were persuaded that He was not to use that power, that He was to allow Himself to suffer and to die, and they, with relief and triumph, said to one another, "He saved others, he cannot save himself. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."

Not to dwell on the suspense of the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, let us consider the situation which their words describe, and see how true it is of the life of Jesus throughout all His earthly ministry. To Him there was presented from many sources, by many agencies, and in many ways the

alternative, which was set forth in the words of the chief priests. It was a question as to the meaning of the fact that He was the Son of God, and as to the interpretation of His mission to the world. It is of importance to consider this alternative, as in lesser measure and on a smaller scale it is the alternative that confronts every man who has a work to do in the world. For Jesus is the representative man, in whom humanity has faced and overcome its fiercest trials, and who has met all the situations in which a man may find himself, and has left an example, in every case, of how temptation is to be met and overcome. Looking back over the life of Jesus, as it is set forth for us in the Gospels, we see that, at every stage of His life, at every new departure in His work, these two alternatives were somehow set before Him—If He is to save Himself, He cannot do His work; if He is to do His work, He cannot save Himself. The opening scene of His ministry, as it is also the greatest in His religious experience up to the time when it happened, is the baptism of Jesus by John. That is the opening of His public ministry. He persuades John to baptize Him, “for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” When the baptism is accomplished, there came to Him the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the hearing of the voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son.” Then He is led

of the Spirit into the wilderness, or as Luke says, He is driven of the Spirit. The descent of the Spirit and the hearing of the voice from heaven are closely connected in all the Gospel narratives with the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. He is led or driven by the Spirit into solitude, and He is willingly led. For this must have been a great crisis in the life of Jesus, and He must be alone to think it out. His servant, whom He met on the way to Damascus, felt a similar need, and he went to Arabia, to think, and to reflect on the meaning and tendency of the great fact which had entered into his life. So Jesus felt the need of solitude, of being far away from all distracting influences. What was the meaning of the baptism, of the descent of the Spirit, of the heavenly voice? So He went into the wilderness, and in the wilderness He thought it out, until He saw what was meant by the heavenly voice, what was the kind of life He had to live, and the kind of work He had to do. For forty days and nights He was so occupied with the thought and feeling appropriate to the situation that He forgot that He had a body, was oblivious to all temporal needs, and He was afterwards an hungered. During these forty days He was learning the meaning of the heavenly voice, and what were the burdens which the beloved Son should have to bear. So in the fellow-

ship of the Father He learned to know what was the work of the Son, and what sonship to the Father meant.

At the end of the forty days the conflict began. There were two possible interpretations of what was meant by sonship. The one was the interpretation of Jesus, the other was the interpretation suggested by the tempter, in all the three forms of the temptation. The essence of these, we shall see, was presented often to the Lord in the course of His ministry. Once, again, and a third time it was suggested to Jesus by the tempter that the sonship meant special privileges, and special exemption from the usual lot of man. Why should the Son of God suffer hunger when He had the power of changing stones into bread? When this suggestion was rejected and the true view of life and its sources of preservation were set forth by Jesus, there came the second suggestion, to try what was the meaning of sonship to God, a temptation to make an experiment in order to find out what was implied in sonship. Into the details we cannot enter now, but this is the essence of the second suggestion. But Jesus had seen that the meaning of sonship is to live in dependence on the Father, to do the Father's work, and to fulfil the Father's will. Then a third time it is suggested that the proper view of sonship was to

spare Himself as much as possible, and if His work was to subdue all kingdoms to Himself as the Son, there was a short and easy way of accomplishing it. The kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them might become His possession, if He were to fall down and worship the tempter. But this suggestion was thrown back to the tempter in the memorable words, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The weapons by which Jesus repelled the temptations and overcame them were taken from the ancient Scriptures, in which was then contained the revelation of God to man, and these were the common property of all God's people. The Son used only those sources of strength which were open to all Israel, and to all the people of God. From these Scriptures He drew the conclusion that sonship did not mean privilege, did not mean exemption from the ordinary conditions of creature life, and did not mean that the Son was to take exceptional measures for the accomplishment of His life-work. On the contrary, they taught that the Son was to live in daily dependence on the Father for daily bread; it meant that the Son was not to make experiments for the sake of proving the reality of His sonship. They taught that sonship meant service. "God only shalt thou serve." The higher the rank in the scale of being, the more

binding the conditions of service are. Sonship meant service. "Even Christ pleased not himself," so one of the greatest of His servants summed up the matter.

Thus the Son came forth from the solitude of the wilderness, and the conflict there, with the knowledge that He was to speak the Father's words and do the Father's works, and the Father only would He serve. The Father's words would be given Him as He needed them, and the power to do the Father's works would be given Him as He asked for it. So through the years of His ministry He was ever in communion with the Father. When He needed bread for hungry people, He asked it from the Father, and received it. When He desired to heal the sick, to bring back a man from the dead, He prayed to the Father, and then spake the word of power, "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead came forth.

But He was never allowed to forget that there were two ways and two alternatives. It was forced upon Him in many ways. We read in the Gospels that in the intensity of feeling called forth by His work and His interest in the people, He seemed to His friends to have forgotten the limits set to human strength. "The multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." This was at the end of a long time of continuous and

exhausting work. His friends were alarmed at the state of things, and "They went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself." As if they had said, This enthusiasm is killing Him, we must go forth to take care of Him. They went forth, and could not come near Him because of the multitude. They stood on the outskirts of the multitude, and the multitude passed the word to Him, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." Evidently our Lord recognised this to be a form of the old temptation which He had experienced in the wilderness, though this time it came from those who loved Him well. It was the old alternative, Save Thyself and lose Thy work, or lose Thyself and do Thy work. He chose the alternative which placed His work highest and first. So He said, "Who is my mother and my brethren?" "Behold my mother and my brethren," said He, looking on them who sat about Him; "for whosoever doeth the will of God the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother." It was the old alternative, and the choice is again made of service—service to be done at whatever cost, and to be done as the Father directed. So He chose to go on with His work, though His friends should say of Him He is beside Himself. But the temptation came with the greater keenness because it

came from those who loved Him, cared for Him, and were deeply interested in His welfare. So indeed the greater temptations come, not from the tempter, but from those who love us best, and in the most unselfish way. "He will kill himself, he is beside himself," so in the midst of an exhausting spell of work our friends say. Yet it is more important that the work be done, and done at the time, than that the workman should spare himself. The workman may exhaust his strength in the doing of the work, but that is of small consequence if only that work be done which could be done by no other, and only by himself at that period of time.

Again the alternative was presented to Jesus, and this time it was presented to Him by the foremost of those men whom He had chosen to be His disciples and His apostles. At Cesarea-Philippi He chose to test His disciples, in order to ascertain what they had learned of Him during the time they had followed Him. So He asked them two questions: "Whom do men say that I am? Whom do ye say that I am?" And having received the answer, "Thou art the Christ," went on to tell them the meaning of the work of the Christ. It meant service, it meant hard work, it meant death. But this view of the Christ and His work did not please the disciples, who did not know that the

sonship meant service; and Peter, as usual, gave expression to the feeling which all the disciples shared. "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee." Peter was himself rebuked by the Master, who said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things which be of God but the things which be of man." The vehemence of the rebuke to Peter shows how keenly our Lord felt the force of the words of Peter and of the suggestion underlying them. To Him had come the conviction that only through the way of suffering and death could He do the service appointed to Him by the Father. This was the thing which savoured of God. It had come home to Him as the fruit of much fellowship with the Father, and He accepted the Father's will. It was not without much thought and feeling that He had reached this conclusion, and now the most prominent of His disciples repudiated the thought. Need we wonder that our Lord was pained at the remonstrance of Peter, and at the thought that His disciples understood so little what was implied in being the Messiah? From that time forward He took pains to familiarise them with the thought of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. How little they knew of the necessity that lay on Him, how un-

welcome to them was the thought of His sufferings and death, may be learned from their behaviour up to the morning of His resurrection. He had told them of what was involved in the fact of His Messiahship, and they did not receive it. When His words were fulfilled, and when they saw Him on the cross, they were amazed, and were filled with despair. They had thought only of the things which were of men, of a Messiahship which could be fulfilled without the agony of Gethsemane and without the sacrifice of the cross, and they were so wedded to that thought that the fact drove them to despair when it arrived.

The same alternative was presented to Jesus from the lips of the chief priests, elders, and scribes. Let Him show Himself to be the Son of God by coming down from the cross, and we will believe Him. Last of all, the alternatives, which were constantly present to the mind of our Lord, and which had been presented to Him from so many sources, were presented to Him, in a very striking way, by those who suffered with Him. This scene, as written by Luke, is so well brought out in the Revised Version, that we quote it: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him,

said, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." The alternatives are vividly presented here. The Revised Version brings out the fact that the impenitent malefactor did believe that Jesus was the Christ. But it did not enter into his mind that the fact of being the Christ laid on Jesus the burden of acting as the Christ. In the malefactor's mind was the rooted conviction that self-preservation was the first law of life, and all that a man had he ought to give in exchange for his life. He could not see the advantage of being the Christ if He did not save Himself. "Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us." The only kind of salvation he thought of was salvation from present pain, from the cross, and from impending death. It had not entered into his mind that he needed another kind of salvation—salvation not from suffering, but salvation from sin. All kinds of men seek the one kind of salvation, only those who have felt the burden of sin seek for the other kind of salvation. But He was called Jesus because He was to save His people from their sins. What is the salvation which we seek—salvation from the penalty of sin, or salvation from sin itself?

Thus we see that through all His earthly ministry the two alternatives were presented to the mind of our Lord, and presented with increasing distinctness as the time went on. From the tempter at the outset of His ministry, from His mother and His brethren during the course of it, from His disciples and Peter as it drew near its close, from the chief priests, elders, and scribes while He hung on the cross, and from the thief, who desired Him to use His Messiahship for His own benefit and theirs, from friend and foe alike, came the suggestion that there was an easy, a less costly way of accomplishing His work. From first to last, from whomsoever the suggestion came, Jesus resolutely and steadfastly set it aside. Nor was it merely from those who thus presented the alternative to Him that the thought came. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" So He expressed Himself when the full issue of His steadfast choice lay clear before Him. Nay, so great was the burden which He had to bear, that His strength was taxed to the uttermost to bear it. In the agony of the Garden He asked if it were possible for the cup to pass? "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." With strong crying and tears He asked if it were possible to find a less costly way of doing His work. "Being in an agony he prayed more

earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Thus He had to make the great decision, and to make it for the last time. Having made it, He went forward to the end, though His journey led Him into the valley of the God-forsaken, and into the experience of the lost. He had to go into the place and the experience of being where God seemed not to be.

"Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" So He spake to the two, on the way to Emmaus, after He was risen from the dead, and after His work was complete. But we shall not understand the conflict of His life, nor measure the constancy of His steadfast choice of the higher way, if we do not realise in some measure the fact that day by day He had anew to face the great alternative, and day by day choose the things which were of God. He was faithful to His calling and His work, and daily resolved to choose as He chose at the first. But it was a real choice, painfully done, and strenuously accomplished. It brings our Lord nearer to us, when thus we can think of Him as "tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin." We should miss the strength and comfort which should come to us from the devout study of our Lord's life, if we did not realise that all these suggestions which we have enumerated called Him to

a real decision, and led Him to a greater victory. It was a real situation which always met Him, and at each step there was a possible parting of the ways, and He always had to make a real choice; and He chose the upward, thorny path which led to the agony of the Garden and the death on the cross.

In our way and in our measure, we are also ever called on to make a similar choice. To each of us a mission has been given, a task has been assigned, and a work has been given to do. Each of us has only one life to live, one place to fill, one work to do. It can only be accomplished if we have a clear vision, a pure heart, a good conscience, and a resolute will. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the Gentiles." So wrote Paul, and in so writing described his life-work. But there is an ideal for each one of us, a work to do, a mission to accomplish, which can only be done at great cost and toil. To us, as to our Lord, there comes the necessity of making a decision. How sadly we remember the ideals of our opening manhood, the strenuous work we planned for ourselves, the high aims we cherished, in the golden days of youth! Most of us remember, also, how we became reconciled to second-rate ideals, how we became contented with what we called practical aims, and we look back with pity on ourselves as having been visionary and im-

practicable in these early days of ours. Perhaps these later aims of ours mark the decline of our manhood from the heights to lower and easier levels. Perhaps they would tell us, were we to listen, that we had really come to believe that man can live by bread alone, that we might fairly use the position we have won for our own comfort and glory. Perhaps also this decline might tell us that we have sought to accomplish our work by doing homage to the lower powers of life, by accepting the maxims of worldly prudence as the guide of life, or of worshipping the tempter in order to win the kingdom. There is a parallel between the temptations of our Lord and ours, and if we follow Him we may also overcome, as He overcame. May God grant us a clear vision of our life-work in the world, and a resolute determination to work it out, whatever the cost may be !

III

ENLARGEMENT OF HEART

“Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged.”—ISA. lx. 5.

THE chapter opens with a call to duty, and an exhortation to the people of God to rise to the height of their great calling. For the light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen on them. Being shone upon, they are bound to shine. So the command is vigorously given, “Arise, shine,” and the prophet expects a real response on the part of those who are shone upon. All the more is this expectation warranted when he looks elsewhere than upon the people of God. In contrast to the light which shines on them, darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the peoples. But on them the Lord shineth, and His glory is visible upon them. Light and glory shining here, and there darkness, even gross darkness. The peoples are attracted to the light and the glory, and the nations come to the light, and kings to the brightness of the rising of

the people of God. Then the prophet, realising the scene, calls on the people to look around, to watch the wondrous sight, and to realise their glory and responsibility. Light and glory with them, and the kings and peoples trooping to them from afar, sons and daughters in unexpected numbers assembling around them, what will the people do in these circumstances, and how will they feel under these unwonted conditions? Having described the scene and the new conditions of the people of God, the prophet goes on to set forth their feelings and behaviour as they realise the new duties and responsibilities arising out of them. "Then shalt thou see and be lightened, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged." In these words the prophet gives expression to a universal principle of human conduct when men are placed in circumstances similar to those set forth in the preceding paragraph of the chapter. When new privileges are conferred on man, when new duties are seen, and new responsibilities are recognised as appropriate, then the heart of the man trembles, throbs with excitement, and his nature is enlarged to meet the responsibilities of the new situation. That is the principle set forth in the text, let us try to illustrate it, and use it.

Let us remember that the word "heart" has a very wide meaning in the Scriptures of the Old Testa-

ment. It is used to express the whole inward nature of man. It is the seat of knowledge, it is the home of feeling, and it is the spring of action. Our modern analysis of man's inward nature into thinking, feeling, and willing had not been reached by the men of the olden time, and when they wished to describe the inward nature of man they spoke of the heart of man. "I will give them a heart to know me," says Jeremiah. Other passages ascribe the feelings and the volitions to the heart of man. So the prophet here, when he says, "Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged," does not refer merely to the emotions, nor to the actions, nor to the thoughts of men, but to all of these together. The people of God will see more clearly, will have wider horizons, will have larger thoughts, and thoughts more adequate to the facts. They will have wider, deeper, truer feelings, and they will be able to embody these in more fitting forms of action. While this is true, yet the main stress may be laid on the emotions, on the feelings present in the hearts of the people of God when the glory flashed on them, and the nations came to the brightness of their rising.

As to the word rendered "fear," it is not exactly fear itself which is meant, but the excitement, the exaltation, the throb which comes when a man trembles on the verge of action, that is meant by this word.

38 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

It is the thrill which comes to a man as he girds himself up to a new departure. Many emotions mingle together in the expression which is rendered "fear." Anxiety, expectation, dread, hope, the longing to take the plunge, and the hesitation to take it, are all blended here in the complex state so briefly indicated by the prophet. It is the feeling of the swimmer, stripped for the water, and poised on a rock high above the sea, about to sweep off for a dive into the wave. He shivers for the moment, and pauses for the instant, ere he makes the plunge. His heart throbs and trembles ere he makes the venture. So on the eve of every new departure, or whenever a man makes a momentous decision, his heart throbs with a great emotion, and it is in the strength of a great emotion that he summons courage to make the new departure.

"Thine heart shall throb with an emotion corresponding to the greatness of the situation." So it is in life at every great crisis of living. It is the way by which human nature is made, by which men attain to manhood, by which Christian men attain to Christian manhood. Let us try to think it out.

Take up the great roll of the heroes of faith recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and consider them one after another, and you will find yourselves in the sphere of great

emotions, in the presence of men whose hearts feared and were enlarged. In all of them you will find a similar experience, a sudden revelation of a high calling, a swift intuition of a great work to do, or a great sacrifice to make, a reluctance to rise to the height of the occasion, and a shrinking from the responsibility of the work pointed out by the vision. Not to dwell on Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, think of the father of the faithful, and of the decisions which Abraham was invited to make, and which he did make. He went out, not knowing whither he went. He sojourned in a strange country, he looked for a city which had foundations, whose Builder and Maker was God. Not much is said of the thoughts and emotions of Abraham when he received the call, nor is anything said of the shrinking he must have felt when he was called to leave home and relatives and friends, and to go forth not knowing whither he went. But we may be sure that it was done under the influence of a great emotion, and his heart did throb and was enlarged to cope with the new situations which successively arose during the course of his pilgrimage. Or consider Moses, for of his feelings and emotions and thoughts we know a great deal; there is a record of them in the story of his life written in the Scriptures. Brought up on the steps of the throne, learned in all the wisdom of

the Egyptians, with the training of a prince of Egypt, his sympathy and his interest were with his kinsmen, and early he showed how great was his concern for them. It showed itself in ways which brought him into personal danger. He made his choice, and the decision meant banishment, poverty, exile. He fled to Midian, and in a humble calling lived and wrought for forty years, till the time was ripe. The workman was being prepared for the work, while the sphere of work was being prepared for him. Read the instructive story of the bush which burned and was not consumed, the call to Moses to be the leader of his people to freedom, the reluctance of Moses to accept the call, the reasons which to him justified his reluctance and hesitation, and the way by which he was persuaded to accept his calling, and you will feel your own hearts throb with sympathetic feeling as you realise the situation in which he was placed. His heart throbbed with the desire to go forth to the help of his people; his courage failed as he thought of the magnitude of his task, and of his own felt unfitness for it. So his heart feared, and the fear grew as he thought of the work he had to do, but with the greatness of the emotion came the enlargement of heart which was one of the elements that made him fit for the mighty work of being the leader and lawgiver of Israel.

So it is with all the names of that great roll of heroes recorded in that chapter; so it is with the prophets of Israel, as we note in the call of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel, and of others, to the great office of the prophet; so also with the kings and psalmists of Israel, whose call to office has been recorded in Scripture. To them came the call and the vision, the thrill of feeling, the throb of excitement, the vision of the greatness of the call, and the feeling of unfitness for it. But with the throb of excitement came also the widening of the nature which made them fit for the exercise of their great calling. Think also of Peter at the Galilean lake, of Paul on the way to Damascus, of John at Patmos, and of the exaltation of nature which corresponded to the call, and you will see how true to fact is the word of the prophet, "Thine heart shall throb and be enlarged."

First the vision and the call, and next the thrill of feeling which responds to the call, and then the enlargement of heart which makes one fit for the working out of the call; such is the order of the prophet's statement. It is universally true of every true workman and his work, whatsoever be the sphere of his work. True of the thinker and his thought, true of the poet and his vision of the beautiful, true of the artist and his art, true of the man of science and his insight into the processes of nature, and true

in general of every man to whom comes any vision of the true, the beautiful, and the good. The process is one, and the results are the same in kind and measure. To everyone, brooding over his life and its possibilities, comes the vision of what may be in his life and work. He seems to see what may be the outcome of his life, and what work may be possible for him. All of us have had our visions, our dreams, and like Joseph we may tell them to others. Great ideals flash on us, and perhaps we cherish them, perhaps frown on them and call them by contemptuous names, and then they are apt to vanish into nothingness. Our high ideals which we cherished in our youth give place to ideals of a lower, more practicable kind, as we think, and life sinks down into the commonplace and the usual. Thus often in human life the visions of youth, the high ideals of the opening years, pass into the background and often vanish away; and there are many lives that never thrill to the touch of a high ideal, or tremble at the presence of a great opportunity. Lives become dull, prosaic, commonplace, simply because the higher ideals and the bolder visions have been neglected and discouraged, till they ceased altogether to trouble the deeper waters of the soul.

But the work of great men has been the outcome of spirits which have been true to their high ideals,

and have kept the vigour and purity of their dreams untarnished by the prose of life, and have refused to lower their ideals to the level of those who have allowed the vision of the heavenly to pass out of their lives. It is not possible to illustrate this now as it might be illustrated from the lives of the poets, the painters, the philosophers, and the men of science—in fact, of all the great workers of the world. The vision came to them, their hearts thrilled to the reality of the vision, and they toiled to make their vision visible to other men, and they succeeded. So to-day we live in a world of wide horizons, we have thoughts which travel through eternity, because these were true to the vision they saw, and embodied it in words and deeds which other men may read and imitate. But these are the men whose hearts feared and were enlarged, and who opened out paths on which the feet of other men might safely tread.

The vision comes, and the response comes also, and the heart fears and is enlarged. Passing from the fact that this has been so in the case of all the great workers of the world, let us dwell for a little on the state of mind depicted here. For the prophet implies that without the fear, the thrill, the excitement, there can be no enlargement of heart, no widening of the nature, no upbuilding of character. Wide and deep feeling are needed in the making of

man. Nor is deep feeling possible without the vision of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Feeling keeps pace with intelligence, and it responds to every enlargement of the vision. Feeling is needed to strengthen the vision, and the wider vision calls forth a deeper emotion, and these translate themselves into action. Such is the rhythm of life. Deep feeling, intense emotion is needed to enable us to make new departures, to initiate a new course of action, or to overcome the tendency to run in an old rut. Intense emotion is needed, for instance, to enable us to repent, and to overcome the past, and to turn away from it, as it is needed to begin a new way of life, or to cherish a new aim after an ideal. But the intense emotion which enables us to break with the past, to make a new beginning, and to proceed along a new path, tends to be translated into action, and to form a habit. When it is so translated into action it tends to pass away and to appear no more in the consciousness of the man. The intense emotion arising out of the higher vision, which enabled us to make the new beginning, when it is once translated into habit, can never return. We can never experience again the feeling we had when we made our first speech, when we preached our first sermon, and we can never experience the great emotion we felt when we first came to the Lord's Table, or have that feeling which we

experienced when first we knew the Lord. That feeling has done its work, has been translated into action, and the power of feeling is set free for further work. Men, not having observed this law of feeling, have made for themselves a great deal of gratuitous misery. They have striven to feel over again the fervour of their first love, to recall the exaltation of their first communion, or the thrill of their first religious experience, not knowing that feeling has been set free from these old situations, in order to help them to realise situations appropriate to a more advanced Christian life.

There are those who fail to respond to the vision, and who thus lose the power of feeling that deep emotion which the prophet here describes. There are those who respond to the vision once, and having seen and felt the glory of it, desire to live always in the enjoyment of that exalted emotion. But the emotion passes, as the vision, or that form of the vision, becomes familiar. The great emotion was not meant to last, it was meant to accomplish something, and having done its work it passes away. Nor have we any right to be miserable on that account. Both the vision and the emotion were meant to pass into action, and to be fixed into character, and we are meant to pass on to higher forms of the vision, and to other and perhaps deeper forms of emotion.

For no vision can exhaust the great reality of truth, of beauty, and of goodness, and we must press on to see the highest and to love it. The way to maintain freshness of feeling is to obtain fresh views of truth, fresh conceptions of duty, and new powers of work. The word of the prophet, "Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged," is not exhausted by one application of it in the life of a man. Rather is its meaning continually renewed as our experience widens. Limiting it, at present, to our distinctive religious experience, and to our distinctive Christian experience, let us say that our vision of the reality of Christ was true as we saw it at the time of our conversion, when we had the great experience of the forgiveness of our sins for His sake, and through His atonement for us. The great emotion we then felt when we realised that for us there was no more condemnation, was a real and true emotion, and we rejoiced in it with great joy. But the emotion faded as that situation was realised, and the feeling corresponding to the situation of "no condemnation" became less lively, for the Christian mind was led on to further aspects of Christian experience and to deeper views of Christ, and the feeling changed accordingly. The meaning of Christ was not exhausted by the freedom from condemnation wrought for us by Him. As we discovered more and more

of Him, our feelings followed our discoveries, and emotion followed after Him, as His glory and fullness were more and more unveiled to us. The old emotions passed into the background, or rather were worked into the character of a settled habit, and we were free to follow the unfolding of the majesty of Christ.

The practical lesson is, Do not strive to reproduce the past, and do not fret because you cannot experience again the emotions of former stages of the Christian life. These are not meant to be repeated, and you cannot have them, any more than you can have the snows of last winter. But you may have in their place emotions deeper, wider, more intense, for you may have truer, more intimate, more adequate conceptions of Christ than were possible to you at that former stage of your experience. For emotion must correspond to the situation, and when the situation becomes familiar the emotion passes away. But, building on the old situation, we raise a higher edifice of Christian experience, and stage by stage the building is set up. As each section completes itself, and as emotion passes into habit, the impulsive power of feeling is set free to attach itself to new developments, and to set in motion the spiritual intelligence and volition in order to advance to wider apprehension of truth as it is in Jesus, and to take

fuller possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ :
“ Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus.” The high emotion of former years, the emotion which set me on the path of Christian living, and gave me strength to break with my sinful past, is itself past and gone. It can never be recalled, for the situation is changed, and that emotion has worked itself into character. But the power of emotion has not passed away. It is there, ready to lift me up to a higher level, waiting for the new vision of greater worth and loveliness than could be discerned by me in the olden time, ere that former emotion had enlarged my heart. So there is progress in the Christian life, and at each progressive stage there is the added vision and the responsive emotion. We do not need to ask where is the view which once we had of the Lord, for, with the growth of the Christian life there is a more glorious view, in which the former is lost ; we have now a wider, truer view of the all-sufficiency of Christ. That is, if we have been true to the former vision, there is a truer vision to-day than then, and a greater enlargement of heart to bear it, and to translate it also into action.

Thus we ought not to seek or to ask for a repeti-

tion of the former vision, or for a renewal of former experiences; there is some better thing in store for us. There is the fulness of Him in whom there is all the fulness of God. There is the treasure of truth for the intelligence, there is the wealth of eternal life for the heart, there is the clearness of guidance for the conscience and the will in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But each advance is costly, and repeats, on a higher stage, the features of the former experience. There is the desire to linger in the experience which was accompanied with that great emotion, and the desire to continue in the enjoyment of that exalted state of feeling. But the laws of human nature and the voice of the Lord call to us and say, "Arise, let us go hence." We may be reluctant to go, we may linger, but go we must, if we are to be true to Him. Changes are needed, and changes are accordingly appointed, whether we welcome them at the outset or no. For at every stage of Christian experience the saying tends to be true that those who know no changes fear not God. Without change feeling becomes dead, without change the intelligence loses that stimulus which keeps it active, and without change the will need not make any decision. So changes come, and with the change comes the challenge to the whole nature of man, and stirs it up to a healthy activity.

Thus some features of the old situation which first called forth the great emotion are repeated at every turn of the upward spiral. "The heart fears and is enlarged." A vision of the higher level is disclosed to our view. We recognise that the next step must be upward to it, and the heart fears, throbs, trembles, and under the impulse of the great emotion we stir ourselves up to undertake the fresh task, and thus another stage is reached, another layer is added to the edifice of the Christian character, and the new attainment becomes the foundation of a fresh advance. So our text is not a description of one step in the Christian life, nor of one supreme effort; it sets forth a law of continued Christian experience. It helps us, also, to understand the exhortations, so frequent in Scripture, to wakefulness and watchfulness, to the need of going on; for it tells us that the secret of the maintenance of the Christian life lies in its continuous growth. It is not possible to stand still, for every situation is speedily exhausted, and when a situation is exhausted it cannot call forth that tide of feeling without which life would be without interest or stimulus. Every conquest is the signal for a new campaign, every victory the call to a new effort, and every effort may be described in the words of our text, "Thine heart shall fear and be enlarged."

Finally, the text discloses the abiding interest of

Christian life. It can never be without interest to him who lives it, it can never be monotonous; for as it unfolds itself and becomes more fully conscious of its great meaning, it opens to itself fresh fields, higher intellectual, emotional, and volitional possibilities, and calls on us to make them actual. Thus the people of God in the olden time, as the prophet saw them being shone upon with the glory of God, shone, but they also arose to the higher duty, and set themselves to make room for the peoples who came trooping to them, and for the sons and daughters whom they discovered by their side. Their hearts trembled, but as they trembled they rose to the height of their duty. So it is still. When men fear in this way, their hearts are enlarged, they see wider fields of work, higher calls of duty, and they respond to the call, and they find they can do what seemed to be utterly beyond their power before their hearts were enlarged.

IV

THINGS WHICH ARE OF REAL WORTH

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”—GAL. vi. 15.

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love.”—GAL. v. 6.

“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”—I COR. vii. 19.

IN these texts from the Epistles of the Apostle Paul there are set on one side circumcision and uncircumcision, and all the class of objects similar to them, and on the other side what to him is essential and vital to Christianity. These are the new creation, faith working by love, and the keeping of the commandments of God. As we think on the matter, we begin to see why Paul declares circumcision and uncircumcision to be nothing and to avail nothing, and yet many then and now believe them to be essential. For circumcision much might be said from a Hebrew point of view. It was the sign of the covenant under the Old Testament dispensation. It

had been solemnly commanded to Abraham, and he and his race had been circumcised, and to be uncircumcised was equivalent to being outside of the covenant of promise. This was well known to the apostle, and on occasion he could recall the fact that he had been circumcised the eighth day. Now, however, he declares that it availeth nothing, that it is nothing. It is now superseded by the more excellent things, namely, the new creation, the faith that worketh by love, and the keeping of the commandments of God. But there is a tendency in man to cling to the old, as there is a tendency to place what is easy of accomplishment in the place of what is hard and difficult. So in every age of Christianity we find these substitutes for a new creation and a strenuous life of holiness. Stress is laid on external things, on rites and ceremonies, on an outward succession, on historical continuity. And these are made to be the essentials of Christianity. Correctness of etiquette takes the place of purity of life. Or with us in Scotland very often correctness of creed, orthodoxy of belief, takes the place of faith working by love. We also take the line of least resistance, and it is so much more easy to be sound in propositions than to work out our creed in common life, that we have often chosen the easier way. I do not propose to dwell on these substitutes for a holy

life, I seek to do what is more important. I desire to unfold, in their order, these things which the apostle has placed in contrast to all that resembles in any way circumcision and uncircumcision. These contrasted things mark out for us the beginning, the growth, and the consummation of the Christian life.

1. A new creation.
2. Faith working by love.
3. Keeping the commandments of God.

I. A new creation. There is a new creation. It is a bold affirmation as we look at it in the light of the literature of the ages. It is one of the commonplaces, nay it is the most characteristic assertion of Christianity, and on the truth of its happening the whole claim of Christianity rests. Opposed to it has been the thought of the world. The denial of its possibility is one of the assertions of the sages. Philosophy and science have declared that the future is the outcome of the past, and that a man's character cannot be changed by any effort of his. There is clearly a measure of truth in this position. What a man soweth, that shall he also reap, is a truth of Scripture as well as a fact of experience. The consequences of action persist, and the man who speaks can never recall the flying

word, nor the man who has acted ever undo the deed.
Or, as it is poetically and despairingly put—

“The moving finger writes: and having writ
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit
Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.”

There is the scientific point of view, which insists on tracing connections, and on finding the explanation of each event in events of a similar kind which have gone before. In fact, in science and philosophy there are no new beginnings, and those who work at these subjects feel that they have no explanation unless they can find it in the preceding course of things. It is easier to work the scheme of explanation in science than in poetry or philosophy. For in these and similar subjects there may be a new beginning for the individual. There may come a time when a man, unaccustomed to great thoughts, happens to light on Shakespeare, on Plato, on any of the great thinkers of mankind, and he enters on a new world, and all things seem new. Or he may come under the spell of a great personal influence, and he changes to come into correspondence with it. In these changes we have a dim foreshadowing of what the apostle means by a new creation. They show that new influences may enter into a man's life, and under the power of it he may throw off the shackles of evil habit, open

his mind to new ideals, and expel from his life all that is inconsistent with it.

But these are only dim intimations of the great change which the apostle postulates, and not he only, but all the writers of the Bible without exception. They believe in the forgiveness of sins. They affirm that iniquity may be blotted out. They say that though the moving finger may write, yet what is written may be cancelled, and sin may be caused to vanish as a cloud. It is not necessary to quote, for the passages are frequent and familiar, and every reader knows how deeply woven into the very texture of Scripture are the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of transgressions.

Nor is there any belief more firmly seated in the Christian consciousness than this conviction that sin has been forgiven, that the past may be overcome. It is of the very essence of the Christian religion. We might cite testimony after testimony until we should have a chain of witness reaching down through the ages from the beginning of revelation to the present hour, all to the effect that man's heart may be changed, that sin may be forgiven, and man may be reconciled to God. Yea, deep down in every Christian heart is the persuasion that its iniquity is pardoned, its sins forgiven, and its nature renewed. No argument can change that belief, nor need anyone urge against it

the objection that such a conviction overpasses the bounds of nature, and postulates something beyond the bounds of ordinary experience. The Christian is well aware of that. He knows that not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God has this change come. He knows that not all his piety nor wit could cancel half a line, nor all his tears wash out one word of it ; but he also knows from the Word of God, and from his own experience, that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth from all sin. He knows that he could not change his own heart, nor cleanse his conscience ; he knows that he could never earn his own salvation ; but he knows also that his heart has been changed, his conscience cleansed, and his salvation is sure. For he has learned of the infinite mercy of God, of the endless love of Christ, and of the witness of the Holy Ghost.

So leaving the question of the possibility of the new creation, let us study it as a fact. The story of the Christian Church is but the record of the fact that men have been born again, that old things have passed away, and all things have become new. One has only to think of the writer of these texts, and of the change from Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle, to have evidence of the reality of the change. One has only to think of Augustine, of Luther, of John Bunyan, to recognise that the new creation is

one of the great facts of human experience. The belief in the possibility of it, the recognition of it as a fact, have been to the human race as life from the dead. We may see it in the wave of spiritual enlightenment, the strenuous endeavour, the sudden lifting of a people to higher levels of thought and feeling, which has come to them when they realise that a new life has inspired them. Then there is a loosening of the bonds of custom, then the prisoners of habit are set free, and in the exaltation of a great emotion new ways of life are opened out to them. Persistence in the new way of life proves the reality of the change, and no one can doubt the fact when they see a sinner become a saint, a selfish man become unselfish, a slave to passion become a man of principle, and shape his life according to the standard of Christian living. Men come to know that a new strength has entered into their lives, and they recognise that it has come from no source within their previous experience. Need we wonder that they accept the Scripture explanation of the great fact, and say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me"? He traces all to the grace of God. And if that grace be real and true it is a sufficient explanation. What the Scripture declares to be true

is a sufficient explanation of the great experience, and the Christian rests in it. God so loved the world as to redeem it, and this redemption is being wrought in me, by the unspeakable grace and love of God. He asks no further explanation; this explanation is sufficient, and he rests in it, and is glad.

2. But the new creation is set in the midst of the old, and, being new, it has to grow as all things grow. The new creature is not complete all at once. Like creation in general, it has to grow by living, by moving, by exercise, by feeling, thinking, acting. It begins as children begin, it grows as children grow, and it grows, as spiritual creatures grow, by setting ends before itself and seeking means to work them out, by forming ideals, or accepting ideals formed for them, and by realising them. So the new creation grows by the faith that worketh through love.

How comprehensive the phrase is, and how it compresses into a sentence the whole breadth of Scripture! It unites into a single phrase the characteristic words of Paul, of James, and of John. It is an old saying that the deepest word of Paul is "faith," that the greatest word of James is "work," and the most profound thought of John is "love." But while the central, characteristic word of each of these teachers is so, around that centre are grouped the words of the other two. Thus the great eulogy of

love—the best description and portraiture of love ever written—was written by Paul, and no one ever laid more stress than he on the necessity of a holy life. And John, who dwells on love so impressively, says of all his writings, “These are written that ye might believe”; and James insists on belief in the Lord as the only condition by which work is possible. In the phrase “faith working by love,” Paul gathers into one the dominant characteristics of all the Epistles.

Faith is the first act, or state, of the new creation. It is the new creature come to the consciousness of itself, of its relations to its Maker, of its surroundings, and of its meaning. For a time it may move in a world not realised, but it is conscious of certain fixed realities, and out of these it begins to form for itself an ordered world. Vague, indefinite, mysterious may the world of faith be in which it finds itself, but it becomes a world of real living experience as the Christian becomes conscious of himself and of his objects. At least, it is at the outset conscious of Christ. It may not yet realise how great and gracious the Lord is, but it vaguely knows that the Lord is there. A child does not know as it lies in its mother’s arms how good and loving the mother is, but it knows something of her love and care. The child lives and grows, and the mother is constantly with him, and he lives by faith in her. More and more clearly the

child learns to know its mother, and to respond to her love. So it is with the new creature in its new world of faith. It grows by striving, by reaching out to the love that surrounds it; it grows by venturing on what it already feels, by trusting, willing, thinking, acting; for faith sets in action all the qualities of the new nature. Nay, faith is its characteristic mode of action.

Faith then works. It is active, energetic living. It reaches forth towards, and strives to take possession of itself and its objects. So Paul describes the evolution of faith as faith working by love. In truth, love is in faith from the outset of both. They cannot be separated from each other. For faith which descries, however vaguely, its object, inevitably strives to take possession of it. The object of faith excites desire after its possession, desire prompts it to explore more fully the nature and excellence of the object of faith, and the worthiness of the object disclosed to the intelligence awakens love, and love reinvigorates faith. Thus head, heart, and will are made to work together, and faith is the source of them all. But a growing faith reaches out in all directions, rouses into activity all the capacities of man's nature, and each faculty is made to reinforce and strengthen the other, until in the harmony of their united action faith is seen to be working by love.

Thus faith is not merely intellectual, is not mere

intellectual assent to truth, nor is it merely emotional, is not a mere mode of feeling, nor is it a matter of the will to believe, nor of action. There is truth for the intelligence, there is guidance for the will, there is life for the heart in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To the intelligence faith says, in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, and it urges the intelligence to search them out, and arrange them in order. To the heart it says there is fulness of life in Christ, indeed all fulness dwells in Him. To the will it says Christ is at once motive and end, impulse and rule, strength and guidance. So each faculty and power of man is set in relation to Christ, and they all find in Him the mode and the measure of their working, their strength and their reward.

Faith working by love acts in two directions. It is set in active hostility to all forms of evil, to all selfishness, and to everything which tends to hinder its appropriation of Christ. It is at war with all that is opposed to God. So Christian life is a warfare, a striving against evil. Here, too, it sets all the faculties at work to discern every appearance of evil, arouses the conscience, quickens the will, and kindles the emotions in order that all these elements of human nature may be set to the destruction of evil and the uprooting of every sinful tendency. On the other hand, faith is growth, assimilation of the character of

Christ, an increasing approximation to His likeness. So faith leads us into wider knowledge, into more active self-mastery, and to the growth of the whole man in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. It sets free every power of man for further growth and for ampler service. And the goal is the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

3. Keeping the commandments of God. At first this strikes us with surprise, and we look at the text more than once in some wonder, and ask ourselves—are these words written by the Apostle Paul? Did Paul, who wrote so much about the law and the hopelessness of keeping the law, who expressly said that by the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified, say that keeping the commandments of God was possible? It is not necessary to summarise here all that he said about the law, about the condemning force of the law, on deliverance from the law,—all this is well known to us. Yes, it is Paul who wrote these words, and he meant them. But he is writing of the law from a new point of view. He is speaking of those who are under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is speaking of them for whom there is no condemnation, and who are in friendly relations, even, with the law which once condemned them. For the new creation the law has a new function. It is now the expression of the Father's

will, and it reveals to them the further grace of the Father. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in a person, and love to Him has also the aspect of loyalty to Him, and a careful observance of His commands. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." So the Master spoke to His disciples, and one of the marks of a disciple is obedience. Thus the apostle is quite consistent in saying that obedience availeth much. The law of God marks out the limits of the Christian life. At least, it marks out those limits beyond which Christian life may not pass. "Thou shalt not" is as imperative to-day as it ever was, but the Christian has learnt that love is the fulfilling of the law, and that all its prohibitions are but the other side of that love which cares for us and is anxious for our welfare.

As the new creation is the beginning of the distinctively Christian life, and as faith working by love marks the evolution of its growth, so the third thing, keeping the commandments of God, may be said to indicate its consummation. Is there any hope of reaching that great consummation? It is, at all events, the goal of our striving, the object of our hope. To think truly, to feel as we ought to feel, to act rightly, must be the goal of the Christian endeavour. We ask again, Is there any hope of that glad consummation? The thought is often put by the Apostle Paul in other

ways, ways which imply as much, though it is put in words which seem more practicable to the Christian heart. He speaks of Christ being formed in us anew, the hope of glory. He teaches that He who began a good work in any of us, will make it perfect. He speaks of being conformed to the likeness of Christ. He even calls us living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. And so on, in ever varying phrases, all meant to express the truth that a Christian man is a man who increasingly becomes a man like Christ, and will ultimately become altogether like Christ. A man in Christ is a man who will be presented to the Father as a man without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

To become like Christ is to be one who keeps the commandments of God. For the Man Christ Jesus not only obeyed the law in all its precepts, negative and positive, He was one in whom the full meaning of the law, its higher and more ultimate purpose, obtained a glorious realisation. The law marked out boundaries, defined the borders of action, but within these borders and subject to these limitations Christ Jesus showed in the fulness of a perfect human life the worth and value of that life the limit of which law had defined. Here there was in living, concrete form the realisation of what law was meant to define, for the sake of which law was brought into existence. Now the new creature, born of God,

growing by faith that works through love, just in proportion to its growth, is growing into the likeness of Christ, and so growing into the power of keeping the commandments of God, as Jesus kept them.

Nor is it a hopeless task for the man who is in Christ Jesus. To the ordinary law-abiding citizen the law of his country is, as it were, non-existent. Without an effort, unconsciously his life is free from contact with the law. He certainly may live all his life without coming into conflict with any law or bye-law of his country or city. Most of our citizens pass their life without making the acquaintance of a judge or magistrate. As is the case with ordinary law-abiding citizens in a well-governed land, so it is with the Christian in relation to the law of God. The activities of the new creature lie in a region which is mainly above the law. The faith which animates him, the love which quickens him into action, direct him to the search after and the acquisition of objects which never come into conflict with the law or the commandments of God. As the love of God is more fully shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit given unto him, as he feels more and more the constraining force of the love of Christ, the more is the strength of his being directed to the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Those impulses, desires, and aims

which hurl a man against the barriers set up by the law of God are more and more attenuated, and the whole strength of his being is set in another direction, and as he dies to sin and lives to righteousness in increasing measure, so the power of obedience grows, until the whole law becomes an internal possession, and he is able to keep the commandments of God. But he is able to keep them just because he is in Christ Jesus, filled with the Spirit of Christ, and strengthened with the strength of Christ.

This, then, is the Christian use of the law of God, and this is the friendly intercourse with the law which a man in Christ may hold. The law which once condemned us is now on our side. All its prohibitions are gracious sources of information to us of these regions into which it is unsafe to enter, of desires which we may not cherish, of aims which we must not think of. All its prohibitions are furthermore sources of knowledge to us of the contrasted contents of that which we ought to desire and aim at. So a man may hope to keep the commandments, for in keeping them he is following in the footsteps of Him who left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

Thus, then, the keeping of the commandments of God is the goal of Christian life. It is the consummation of the new creation, of the life which is ruled by the faith that worketh by love.

V

THE TENDERNESS OF GOD

“ But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father: and shalt not turn away from me.”—JER. iii. 19.

THE Authorised Version does not quite bring out the true meaning of the text. The thought of the verse refers not so much to the saying as to the thinking and reflection which go before the speaking. It refers to a long process of thought and meditation on the problem in hand, and it tells the outcome of the process. The problem is how to put thee among the children? How to do this without injury to the children, and with good results to thee? It represents God as thinking about the problem, dwelling on it, taking steps about it, and then as the outcome of the prolonged meditation we have the text. So it may be rendered thus: “ I thought how I would put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations: and I

thought thou wouldst call me, My Father ; and wouldst not turn away from me." It touches us with wonder and with tenderness as we read, and realise that God is thinking about us, caring for us, working for us, in order to place us among the children, and make us members of His own family. It is no new thought in Scripture, nor in the writings of Jeremiah. It is not necessary to multiply instances of this kind, for they are many. But in the letter of Jeremiah to the captives at Babylon you will find the following: "I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Again, in the 40th Psalm you will find the wonder and gladness of the soul fully expressed as it realises the truth that God is thinking of him. "I am poor and needy: but the Lord thinketh on me." It is a glad surprise for anyone when first he believes that there is tenderness for him in the Centre and Source of all things, that a Heart, full of love and tenderness, cares for man, and that the Eternal, the Almighty, is thinking on him even in his poverty and need. For the first revelation of God, the first impression of Him, is just His greatness, His power, His magnificence, and that impression is deepened because of the ways of God's dealings with men, as these dealings are first apprehended by him. There are the order of the world,

the stately procession of cause and effect, and the magnificent grandeur of law by which the world is governed, which becomes ever more magnificent as men understand it better, and men tend to forget that behind it all, and within it all, is the tenderness of the Father, the care of One who thinketh on us. All the more wonderful does this discovery become as we reflect on what we have been ; on our wilfulness, our weakness, our sin, our guilt, and our disobedience.

It would not surprise us though we thought we were lost in the magnificence of the world, and that we were so little and so insignificant that God the Maker and Upholder of all should not think of us. It would not be a wonder to us if we were to think that the Just, Righteous, and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity should regard us with indignation and scorn, not because we are weak, but because we are wicked. But we are surprised when we are told that great though the universe is, yet God thinketh on me, and holy though the living God is, yet He is working in order to put me among the children. So great and unexpected is this fact that it has to be repeated over and over again ere we can believe it, and has to receive great and varied proof ere we can rest in it. There is no truth of Scripture more insisted on, and there is no

truth which a sinful man needs so much as this, that God is thinking about him and working for his good.

So I desire to speak of it, to dwell on it, to put it this way and that way, until we grasp it in all its consoling and strengthening power. It is really the whole story of the Bible. It is the story of God, not merely having patience with men, exercising forbearance with them, not marking sin, for if He were to mark iniquity who could stand? It is much more than this. The Bible is the story of a God who loves, toils, works for men, rising up early to work for them, striving to make them make themselves, for He desires to have them among the children with their glad consent and with their active co-operation. But the practical aim of this sermon is to impress you with the conviction that God is thinking of you individually, caring for you, is interested in you, and that it is a matter of concern to Him how you think, how you feel, and how you behave. Yes, He cares for you more than you ever cared for yourselves, and He loves you with a deeper, wiser love than your mother ever felt for you. Gather together all that you can think of love and tenderness, sum it up till it surpasses all that you can imagine, and even then you fall immeasurably short of the great reality of the tenderness of God. He is ever thinking, asking

about you, and trying to find a way of putting you among the children.

"I thought how I would put you among the children." The text comes to us through Jeremiah, to whom we owe so much of true, tender, and adequate teaching about God. No prophet ever revealed to man the tenderness of God as Jeremiah did, for no prophet ever felt the need of it so greatly as he did. The Bible is a book of human experience, and because it is so it is also a book of Divine revelation. For revelation is human experience. Ah! the Bible is a costly book. It is compiled out of the tears, the agonies, the toils, the sufferings, and the strivings of men. Every great truth about God and about man is a great human achievement, as it is also a great revelation of Divine grace and mercy. Jeremiah, placed in the midst of a great crisis, having a work to do and a testimony to bear which his people did not like, and having to cast himself on God for strength, preached judgment, punishment, and yet no man ever obtained a firmer grasp on the tenderness of God and the freedom of man and his responsibility. To him came the revelation of the tenderness of God, and the wondrous vision of a new covenant and of a law written on the heart of man, a law which should no more come from above and from without, but from within, and the statutes of God should become the

songs of man. So it is through the story of the Bible. Every onward step of revelation has been slowly won, and every record of that living word is written in the toil, effort, and striving of man. And that part of it on which each messenger laid stress was just that part which he himself had won by the grace of God, and told to his generation.

As of the Bible generally, so of the Book of Jeremiah. He tells us much about the love and tenderness of God, for these he felt in his own life, and by them he was able to endure. His book is rich in interest when one gets inside of it. It is full of national, personal, and religious interest. It is rich in religious knowledge, and marks a great advance in the progress of revelation. What he taught he learned through suffering, sorrow, striving. He was driven back on the tenderness of God, because he received no sympathy from man. He was placed in a great crisis; he was sent with a message from God, which men would not receive. He must speak, for God had sent him to speak, and the people would not hear. Rather, they resented the fact that he would continue to speak, after they had refused to listen. They reviled him, persecuted him, made him suffer, and the hardest thing for him to bear was precisely their hostility to his message. He is, I repeat, driven back on the sympathy and tenderness of God, and through his

need came the revelation to all men of the sympathy and tenderness of God. He learns to know God, to enter into the secret of God, and to reveal it to all the world.

He brings men into the secret of the Divine presence, and enables them to hear the consultation of God with Himself. "I thought how I would have put thee among the children." That is the problem which is being thought out. It grows in its surprising wonder the more we think about it. Not merely that God is thinking about you, but the fact that He is deliberating about the way by which you are to be placed among the children, and about the special way in which you in particular are to be won to your place and function in His family. For there are many things to consider. Would it be good for you to be put among the children? Would you be at home among them? Would you find that you had anything in common with them? Could you think the thoughts of the children, care for what they care for? Could you speak their language, and know their meanings—meanings which are packed full of the happy experiences of the family of God? Would it be good for you to be among the children, if you were not a child? Would you be happy among them?

On the other hand, would it be good for the

children if you were put among them? Would your presence add to their comfort, to their enjoyment, or to their progress? This thought raises a number of reflections on which we need not now dwell. The essential thing to consider is the problem itself. For one cannot be put among the children in a sudden and violent manner. That would be no solution of the problem. For you would bring your own atmosphere with you, and you would be among the children, and be still an alien. To be put among the children means in the long run simply that you are to become a child of God. You must be led to regard the place among the children as something desirable, something good, and something to be striven for. You must learn to think of it as the one thing you must obtain, without which you would miss the end of life, however great your achievement otherwise might have been. Thus to put you among the children means to persuade you to be a child. You must become a child by your own effort, your own striving, your own consent. It is not easy to effect this change. It can only be done by making men make themselves.

The problem is how to put among the children one who is not a child. The person who is not a child would be miserable and far from home among the children of God. There would be there nothing to

please, nothing to attract, nothing in which he could take delight. His desires would be elsewhere, and his treasure and his affections would be directed somewhere else. This is one side of the problem how to put thee among the children, and the Bible reveals to us the way which God took to solve the problem. Read the story of the Bible from this point of view. Read it as a story of Divine love, of Divine hopefulness, of Divine toil, and of Divine effort prolonged through the ages. It is the story of the making of man, and it is the story of the Divine patience and hopefulness for man that man will yet be placed among the children. God works with men, God calls men, follows them all the way, bears them as on eagle's wings. It is not possible to tell the story in its fulness here, but it may be read in the Bible itself. Happily it is so far familiar to all of you. You know of Abraham, of Moses, and of Isaiah, at all events you may read the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and understand the great secret of the Divine gift of faith as given by God, and taken and exercised by man. Take the Divine side of the story, and you see God following after men, pursuing them, not leaving them to themselves, striving to win them to Himself. Follow the line of Divine action down through the centuries, follow it on to the greatest manifestation of Divine love in

the gift of the only begotten Son, and you have the practical illustration of the answer to the question of our text. All these great doings are a revelation of the Divine thought of how to put men among the children.

The Divine thinking issued in Divine action, and the action is just the story of redemption. The Divine action is also the Divine appeal to man. It is God's appeal to you to-day. It is simply this, that God, the eternal, infinite, invisible, needs you and wants you, and has a place for you among the children, a place which only you may fill, as He has a work for you which only you can do. Think of God, who is ever thinking of you. Let that thought stir you to nobleness of action, to purity of feeling, to holiness of aspiration. How often has the thought of your mother and of your mother's love saved you in the hour of peril! "My mother's son cannot do this thing, it would break her heart. I must be true to my race and my training, and live worthily of my family." These thoughts have often kept men from sin. But there is a higher appeal to you, an appeal to be something higher, better, nobler than you have yet been. It is the appeal of our text. Answer it from your own, the human side, as God is answering it from His side. Answer it by the attempt to see that your place is among the children, and you can never find rest till

you take your place. That is what you are meant for; your home is in God, who has made you for Himself, and you cannot rest till you rest in Him.

That is the problem, and these are the ways along which God has been working. Now let us follow for a little the thought of God as to the way by which a man is to be put among the children. The solution is just as surprising as the problem. It is surprising in its tenderness, simplicity, and love. Let us follow it. "I thought thou wouldst call me, My Father; and wouldst not turn away from me."

We are inclined to ask, What can it be to the Maker of heaven and earth, to the eternal God, that I should say to Him, My Father? So we might think and say, so we may have said in our unbelief, in our ignorance of real greatness and of the value of spiritual things. If we were to say so, we should act in ignorance of the fact that one spirit is of more value than a material world. We are to know that the return of a man to God, which return is really the making of a man, is of more significance than the making of a world. If we only knew the possible value of ourselves, if we only knew that the finding of ourselves in God, so as to say with truth, "My Father," is of more value to the kingdom of God than the making of sun, moon, or stars. It is the return to the Father of children made in the image of God ;

it is the restoration of the power of speaking to the Father; it is the placing of a son in his right place in the family of God. With this return there is the new quality of real thought, of spiritual worth, of divine fellowship.

For value and worth do not consist in quantity or in bulk. Your thoughts can grasp the universe, but the universe cannot grasp your thought. It is you that God wants, and needs, and has been working for. It is you that He requires to say, "My Father." For in the saying of that great word you surrender to Him your heart, your life, your will, and your thought. You give yourselves to God in all the wealth of your love, in all the devotion of your affection. It really means, not merely that you are among the children, but you are one of the children. You are at home in the Father's house, you have learned the language of the home, with all the meanings which the family have read, in their intercourse with each other and with the Father, into the language of the home. For every family really speaks a language of its own, a language packed with meanings which are not in the dictionary. So when we are able to say, "My Father," we are speaking the language of the family of God. To say "My Father" is not merely to say the words, or to take them on our lips; it means experience with God,

speaking to Him, hearing Him speak, being filled with the Spirit of God, and being entered into the secret of God's purpose. For the secret—the secret which comes from the closeness of familiar and constant intercourse—is with them that fear His name.

“I thought thou wouldst not turn away from me.” It is enough to break the heart of anyone who believes what is here said. “I thought thou wouldst call me, My Father; and thou wouldst not turn away from me.” It reminds one of a mother's love, when her wayward boy forgets he is a son, and the cry that comes from her, “Oh, my boy, why do you turn away from me?” Here is a Father, stretching forth hands of tenderness, ready, yea eager to receive you, and saying, Wilt thou turn away from Me? Brethren, it is true, it is real, God is like that—His love is wider than we know, and His presence is never far from us. We have so often misunderstood Him, so often thought of Him as far from us, or even that He has forgotten us. As in the Book of Isaiah, we, like Israel, had said, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.” And the answer comes back: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee

on the palms of my hands ; thy walls are continually before me." We may be very sure that if we think of God, it is because He is thinking of us. Many times and oft we forget Him, and He is not in all our thoughts. Yet He never forgets, never loses sight of those who are to become members of the family in heaven. We too often think of Him, when we do think of Him, as far off, throned in His heaven, stern, rigid, jealous ; and we do wrong to Him to think of Him in that fashion. We picture Him as if He were one of ourselves, as jealous, bent on the vindication of law, eager to inflict justice. No doubt God is just, God is jealous, God is righteous, yet this God of justice is the God who gave His Son for the redemption of men. If we take the Bible seriously, and the message it contains, we shall come to think of Him as He has revealed Himself in that wondrous story, so wondrous that we sometimes are inclined to say it is too wonderful, too good to be true. But even the Bible does not tell us all that is in the heart of God towards us. Human language could not express, human thought cannot conceive the depth of the riches of the tenderness and the love of God, nor His constant care of men. Trust the picture you have in the Word of God, trust it home. This word of the prophet, this picture of the living God stretching

forth hands of tenderness and love to men, saying to them, "Thou wilt not turn away from me," is a real and true portrait of God. It is the truest revelation of Him that man can ever know.

Think of Him, finally, as Jesus Christ His Son has revealed Him to us, who through the Son may become children. Christ taught us to trust the infinite tenderness of the Father. Nay, Christ in His own compassion, in His passion for doing good, in His search after the lost, was revealing the Father's work, and showing the Father's heart. Take the parables of the lost sheep, of the lost coin, of the lost son, and the picture of the shepherd, of the woman, of the father in these wondrous words, and they tell you what God has been doing for man ever since man was on the earth.

If this be true about God, if it is true that He wants us, needs us, has a place for us among His children; if it be further true that He is saying to us, "I thought thou wouldst call me, My Father; and wouldst not turn away from me," what ought our attitude to Him to become? Are we persuaded that God is good, is loving, is longing to have us among His children? Surely then we shall respond to that call of the Father, and yield ourselves to Him. Is it not enough to break the heart to think that we have refused to respond to such a

word as this? Brethren, there is one thing which a man who has obtained his place among the children will ever regret, and that is the years when the word fell on deaf ears, and the response to God remained unsaid. Years which the locust has eaten; barren, godless years, when the thought of God never occurred to us; years during which He sought us, and followed after us, and we did not know it. We remember when He found us, and when we found Him, when it was borne in upon us, as we looked back over the course of our life and recalled the course of it, how startled we were as we thought, "God was in all my life, and I knew it not. He it was who caused deep waters to cross the pathway of my life, He who hedged up my way with thorns, He who filled me with sadness or gave me joy"; and as we muse over it all we thrill with exquisite feeling as we mark this experience and that, when God was very near, though our eyes were holden that we did not know Him. All these experiences were simply calls from God to recognise Him and His working, times when He was saying, "Call me Father, and do not turn away from me." He was never far from us, even when we were unconscious of His presence. "Nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands and feet." Is it not sad to think of the times when He was so near and we did not know it? Is

it not enough to break our hearts to think of what we lost, because we did not recognise the Father's presence? Let that regret stir us up to resolve to seek His blessed and gracious face continually, and never to miss His Presence when He calls to us.

"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" He is waiting to be gracious, He delighteth in mercy. Yes, but there is a tenderness in our text, a condescension, a beseeching love, which is unspeakable, and I close with the repetition of it: "I thought thou wouldst call me, My Father; and wouldst not turn away from me."

VI

CHRISTIAN GLADNESS

“Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”—
JOHN xx. 20.

THE time of weariness, suspense, and doubt was over ; the disciples knew that the Lord was risen from the dead. Some of them had already seen Him, and all of them had heard the glad tidings. At eventide of the resurrection day, when they were gathered together, in that upper room, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, the risen Lord came to them they knew not how. Through the closed doors He had passed, and suddenly they were aware of His presence. He stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be unto you.” Then He showed them His hands and His side. By every avenue that leads to the inner life of men the Lord entered, and gave them varied proof of the reality of His appearance. They saw Him, they heard Him speak, and He showed them His hands and His side. These

were the places where the nails had pierced, and where the Roman spear had penetrated. These wounds and the places where they were would be in their vivid recollection, and the sight of them would raise their belief in His real presence to assured conviction. They were persuaded that He was with them, and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Here we come into contact with one of the abiding sources of Christian gladness. It is the presence of the Lord that makes His people glad, as it is the absence from Him which makes them sad. Let them have a feeling that He is present with them, and then, whatever be the other conditions of life, the people of Christ are glad. They may have trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments, may be destitute, afflicted, tormented, and may have experience of all these things which make ordinary men sad, yet if in them they have the presence of the Lord, that source of gladness overflows all the sources of sadness, and triumphs over them all. Give a Christian man the sense of the Lord's presence and he is glad. So the pious Israelite, in the olden time, looking up to the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, followed on in hope and courage, and marched through the wilderness, glad

and confident because these told him that the God of Israel was with him and his. They trusted in God, and they knew that His presence went with them when they followed the guiding pillar. So it is still. Christ's people know that He will keep His word—they have borne witness to the fact that He has kept that parting word of His, "Lo, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world." It is one of the axioms of the Christian faith that the Lord is ever with His people; it is one of their experiences that He keeps tryst, and His presence makes His people glad.

There is something unique and singular in this manifestation of our Lord to His disciples. There is something that happened only once, and never again in the course of time. It was in the upper room at Jerusalem that He appeared to them. It was through the closed doors that He came, and He showed to them His hands and His side. No doubt the fact that He thus showed Himself to His disciples remains, and we have whatever comfort and hope may be gathered from the fact. But we cannot see Him as they saw Him. No more to the eyes of sense is He visible, since the cloud received Him from their sight, and the cloud seems to abide there still. Yet the fact of Christian revelation and the postulate of Christian faith are that the

disciples of the Lord, in every age, may see Him and be glad. "Whom having not seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Yet in a very real sense the people of Jesus see Him, and the greatest fact in their experience is just this fact of fellowship with the living Christ.

Let us, however, dwell for a little on this text, and try to find some of the reasons why the sight of the Lord made His disciples glad. We may find that some of these reasons are permanent, and are ours as much as theirs. We may look away from the unique and singular circumstances of this particular manifestation, and find in it something permanent and universal. There may be sources of gladness open to us, too, in this manifestation of Jesus to His disciples.

Why did the sight of Jesus make His disciples glad? First they were glad for the Master's sake, and secondly they were glad for their own sake.

1. They were glad for His sake. Recall the time and the circumstances of the time when they had last seen Him. The latest words of His which they had heard were, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." They had seen Him on the cross, they had seen His lifeless body taken down from the tree, they had seen it hastily laid in the sepulchre,

they had seen the stone rolled to to the door of the sepulchre. The darkness fell; and wearied, sad, and dispirited, they had gone away from the awful scene and terrible time. The Sabbath passed in weariness and heaviness, and the darkness fell again. For them, during the interval there had been no relief from pain, no gleam of hope to lighten the burden of hopelessness and misery. For their hopes were buried in His grave. They looked back with fond regret to the time when He had called them to follow Him, they thought on the bright hopes of the opening years of His ministry. They recalled, I have no doubt, the time when the multitudes left the ministry of John the Baptist to follow after Christ, and the feeling of hope they had as the people recognised the greatness of their Master. Then they thought that the redemption of Israel drew nigh, and that the kingdom of God was at hand. But the fair promise of these opening years had not set into permanent fruit. The multitudes ceased to follow, and by and by they became actively hostile. They had shared the feelings of John the Baptist, who had sent to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" They expected one kind of kingdom of God, and they could not recognise Christ's idea of the kingdom of God as a kingdom at all. But apart from that,

the end had come. Jesus seemed to be defeated, thwarted, overcome. The opposing powers had been, seemingly, too strong. The gathered hatred of chief priests, elders, and scribes, the incited hostility of the people, and the unjust indifference of the Roman governor, had arrested, tried, condemned, and crucified Him, and He was dead and buried. The powers of evil had gotten them the victory, and Jesus seemed to have been defeated, and their hopes lay buried in His grave. Such were the thoughts in their minds, such were the feelings in their hearts.

But now the resurrection caused them to see all these events and circumstances in a different light. The kind of life that Jesus had lived, the kingdom of God which He had proclaimed, the rejection of that kind of kingdom, and the rejection of that form of life by the Jews had a meaning, but that meaning did not indicate defeat; it was really success. Jesus was not defeated, nor was His purpose thwarted. He had burst the bonds of death, and could not be holden by its cords. When the Jews had plotted against Him, when the Roman soldiers arrested Him, when He was led from judgment-seat to judgment-seat, when He was mocked, scourged, condemned, crucified, when He had yielded to death—all these things began to take on a new and greater meaning; for whatever their meaning was, they did not mean

defeat for Jesus, nor did they make His coming or His work of none effect. When the disciples saw the risen Lord, they knew that He had wrested victory from defeat, that through death He had somehow conquered death, and that all the events which had appeared to them so sad and hopeless were really links in the chain of meaning, which the resurrection was to unfold. So they were glad when they saw the Lord, because the resurrection told them that He had won the victory, and had finished His work.

They were glad because they knew that He had overcome all that was hostile to Him and His work. That work was finished. No more would He be called on to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself; no more would unholy lips utter words of scorn and mockery against Him or unholy hands be placed violently upon Him, or cruel people wound Him; no more would the nails rend His flesh, or the thorns pierce His forehead. These things belonged to the past, and that form of work and suffering was over. Need we wonder that the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord, and began to realise what the resurrection meant for Him? But that source of gladness remains for all His people. As we read with bated breath the story of the life and work of Jesus, as we humbly follow on and mark His ways and

actions, and witness with awe and fear the agony of Gethsemane, and shiver as we hear the cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we breathe with relief as we read of the resurrection, and note that that form of His work is over. We are glad that His work is complete, and that the possibility of such experience again is for ever removed from Him. He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God. We are always glad for Jesus' sake that He is crowned with glory and honour, that He is glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. We share that unselfish gladness with all the creation of God, with all the saints who from their labour rest, with the heavenly host who waited for His return after His work on earth was done. For His return meant so much for the universe of God, and so much for the making of a world which could receive God.

Now this source of gladness remains, and abides, apart from any reference that work has to you and me. We rejoice with the Workman in the completion of His work, we are glad to find that Jesus has accomplished the Father's purpose, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable because all the universe of God recognises the worth and value of His work, and have recognised that He is worthy of the reward

He has won. We see Him crowned with glory and honour, and we know that He has all power on heaven and on earth, that around His throne unceasingly the songs of praise arise, and we are glad because the Man of Sorrows has become the Man of unspeakable joy. He has the glory which He had with the Father, He has the added glory won through toil, suffering, agony, and death, and the Lamb as it had been slain has brought the experience of created life, redeemed through suffering, into the very life of the Godhead. So whenever we see the Lord, whenever manifestations of His presence come within our experience, we are glad for His sake, because He endured the cross and is set on the right hand of God.

2. The disciples were glad for their own sake. Scarcely had they felt the gladness of seeing their Lord again, and of knowing that it was well with Him, than there would come to them the remembrance of how they had behaved during the time of His sorrow and agony. He had got no help from them on the night on which He had been betrayed. On that night they were occupied with thoughts of themselves: "there had been a controversy among them, as to which of them should be the greatest." While their Master had felt the waves of anguish advancing with overwhelming power, they were thinking of the places to be assigned to them

in the coming kingdom. As He strove to hearten them, and to prepare them for the coming time of trial, the current of His sympathy was often stemmed by their apathy and inability to understand the situation and the drift of the Master's speech. When in the agony of the Garden He had longed for some wakeful sympathy, the three chosen to watch with Him fell asleep, and He had to endure the agony alone. When the Roman soldiers bound His hands with fetters and carried Him away captive, they all forsook Him and fled. All these things must have come back to them in vivid remembrance as they looked at Him, and saw on His hands and His side the marks of what He had borne. One had betrayed Him, one had denied Him, all had forsaken Him and fled.

What is to be His relation to them, now that He had risen from the dead, and had come back as victor over death and the grave? Will He be to them what He had been before He knew what it was to die? It must have been with strange and mingled feelings that they sat and listened to His words, and looked at His face and form. They were glad for His sake, whatever might happen to themselves. Nothing could interfere with that emotion. But their gladness would greatly increase as they listened to His word, "Peace be unto you." It must have come to them with a glad surprise. Is He to forget and

forgive their conduct during these days before His betrayal and death? The writer of this Gospel, as he began to write the wondrous story of that eventful night, wrote at the beginning of it the gracious words: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is as if he would assure all readers of the Gospel that the love of Jesus to His own was deep enough and strong enough to continue through all these events, and tender enough to persist notwithstanding the unworthiness of His own. He loved them, though there were many things in them that tried His patience and strained His love. But this they had still to learn, and they learned it from Himself, from His deeds and words during the forty days of His further sojourn on earth. First they hear the gracious words, "Peace be unto you." What! they might think, is this the word which He has to say to us after what we have done and what we have been? Is He to forget all these things which we so bitterly remember? It took them some time and many proofs ere they fully realised how gracious and forgiving their Master was. But they did come to know it, and we learn it through them. They learned of His message to Peter, and of His interview with him, and they learned of His talk with the two on the way to Emmaus. In one way and another

it was borne in on the minds of the disciples that the Master loved them and forgave them, that He loved them after He had had the experience of death, as He had loved them before He knew what it was to die. Death had not made any change on Him, at least no change in this respect. He loved them on this side of the grave and on that. It was a love that passed all understanding, and without seeking an explanation of it they finally rested in the great and blessed fact.

But would the great experience through which He had passed, the experience of dying and rising again, make any difference in His relation to them? This thought, no doubt, passed through their mind, and though they could not then find an answer to the question, yet an answer was forthcoming in the after days. It had made no change in His love. He was still the same patient, loving, compassionate, helpful Friend and Saviour He had been during the years in which they had known Him. So when He had ascended up on high, and returned to the Father, they were persuaded that He felt in heaven as He had felt on earth, continued to be touched with a feeling of their infirmities, and was still afflicted in all their afflictions. They could lean on the tenderness of the Saviour. But meanwhile they were glad when they saw the Lord, because His presence told them that He still

loved them, was still their gracious Master, and had come to persuade them of that great truth. Such a love they could not understand. A love that did not depend on the worthiness of the people loved, that death could not touch, that many waters could not quench, surely such a love was unexampled. Neither then nor now can men explain it, for it passeth knowledge. We can only explain it or understand it by coming to understand Him. We can only say it is like Jesus to love after this fashion. Nothing can explain Him, but when we know Him He explains all else.

But this source of Christian gladness is also permanent. We too may rest in the love of Christ, though we never can understand why a love so great, strong, and living should rest on any one of us. It is something to learn from His dealings with His disciples, from His tenderness to them, from His speedy visit to them after He was risen from the dead, what kind of Master we serve. Nor do we recall their behaviour during the former days to sit in judgment on them, but we think of that because it sheds light on the character and ways of the Saviour. For we too have tried His patience very much; we have not used our opportunities; and we too have incidents in our life and conduct quite as unworthy as the forsaking of Jesus, or even the

denial of Him, which we find in the conduct of the first disciples. If notwithstanding these things the Master visited them, He may visit us; if He forgave them, He will forgive us; if notwithstanding their unworthiness He commissioned them to do work for Him, so He may entrust us with work for Him, and give to us the means to do it.

But have we any reason to expect a visit from Him? Not, perhaps, in the same way as that visit was paid to the disciples. We may not see Him with the eye of sense. But Christ is living and working to-day, and He still comes to His people, and they feel the power of His presence. In a true sense the disciples to-day see the Lord and are glad. How may He come, and how may we recognise Him when He comes? To the first question no answer can be given. We know not in what way He may come to His people. Rather we may say we know not in what way He may not come. For He may come at any time, or in any place, or by any means He may please. There is no limit to His coming, and no means He may not use to make His presence known. He may come to us when we are in our working clothes, He may come to us on sea or land, and when He comes His disciples recognise His presence and are glad.

But while He may come, and is free to come to

His people as He pleases, is there any time, any place, any means, by which we may expect His coming, and may we have a right to be disappointed if we do not meet with Him? These ways are also so numerous that we may not enumerate them. But there are times, places, seasons, where the seeking heart is sure to find Him. He keeps tryst. It was when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day that John saw the vision of the Lord, and received from Him the new mission he had to accomplish. It was not the vision of the Spirit that he saw, but being in the Spirit he saw the risen Lord. More definitely we may always expect to find Jesus in His Word. That is the abiding shrine of His presence, and no one seeks Him there in vain. From first to last it is living with His presence, the Old Testament resounding with the forecast of Him who was to come, and the New Testament filled with the presence of Him who has come, and ever continues to come, to seek and to save the lost. We may seek the Word for many purposes, we may read it with other aims than that of finding the Lord there, and we may not find Him. But if we seek Him there, dwelling on Him, longing for His presence, we shall find Him, and recognise His presence and be glad.

But even more particularly, "Where two or three are gathered together into my name, there am I in

the midst of them." I believe this is literally true. Never have His people met together and found that He was absent. True their eyes may have been holden that they did not know Him. True they may have been present in one sense, and absent in another. They may have been present, and their thoughts and desires may have been in the ends of the earth. But when we gather ourselves together in the house of God, when we come seeking His face, burdened, heavy-laden, and longing for deliverance, He is there to set the captive free, to deliver the prisoners, to confirm His people, and to enable them to rejoice in Him. I do not seek to prove this. In fact, it is not susceptible of proof to those who have never felt it. But, after all, it is one of the commonest of Christian experiences that His people find Him in His Word, in His day, in His house, and having learned to know Him there they are ready to find Him everywhere. There is no place where I may not meet with Him, if such is His gracious pleasure. But of this I am sure, that His people do find Him. They do see the Lord and are glad. He visited these disciples in that upper room, and that visit is a testimony to the fact that the living Christ does visit His people. Yes, but He may be present and people may not recognise Him. When the Greeks came to visit Him, and when He then spoke to the

Father and said, "Father, glorify thy name," there came a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." All present heard something. Some heard a confused noise, and said it thundered; others heard something more definite, more like a human voice, and said an angel spoke to Him; others, again, heard a definite voice, speaking words with a definite meaning. They heard and they understood. So it is still. The heavenly voice may speak, and some may hear nothing; others hear confusedly; some hear something vague and indefinite; while some being prepared by their own great need and by the Spirit, recognise the voice of God, and understand the meaning of God.

So the Master is present wheresoever His people meet. He manifests Himself to them; but some are holden that they do not discern His presence; some see men as trees walking; and some, again, recognise the majesty and grace of His presence and are glad. But if anyone does not discern His presence in His Word, in His worship, in His ordinances, the reason must be sought for in them, not in Him. For He is ever present, as He promised. Present where two or three are gathered together, but not only there. "Lo, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world."

VII

THE UNFOLDING OF FAITH

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness love.”—2 PET. i. 5-7.

UNFOLD your faith, and you will find it grow to virtue, to knowledge, to self-control, to patience, to Godlikeness, to love of the brotherhood, and to love. Let us, however, look back to find whence we have come, and around to find where we are in our text. As we look back we find that we have come a long way. If we link ourselves with those to whom this Epistle was written we shall find that we are with those that have obtained a precious faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. To us, with them, grace and peace have been multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His Divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that called us by His

own glory and virtue. Exceeding great and precious promises have been granted, and through these we have been made partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Looking back, we see we have come a long way; looking round, we are in the midst of a great and glorious inheritance. May we not rest and enjoy it? Is there anything pertaining to the Christian life which is not included in what has been set forth in the verses preceding our text? Without entering into that great question, let us ponder the truth of our text. Let us say at the outset that, however great may be our privilege and high our attainment, it is not the way of Scripture to permit anyone to think that he has already attained or is already perfect. Every attainment won, every new gift received, is but the occasion of a new departure. This is true now and here, it will be true throughout eternity. Besides this, says the writer, in addition to all that you have attained and received, give all diligence, unfold your faith. There is no finality in the growth of Christian character, no end to the unfolding of faith.

Add to your faith virtue or manliness. There are various kinds of addition in the world. You may fling a heap of stones together, without an aim and without a plan, and they fall into some sort of shape

under the influence of the law of gravitation. The stones are simply flung together, and no thought is needed to dispose of them. They fall into a certain shape, of necessity. But that is not the addition meant here. There is another kind of addition when you lay stone to stone according to a plan, when you dress the stones and fit them together for your own purpose, and make for yourselves a home to dwell in, a place to work in, or a building in which you may worship God. That is nearer the meaning of our text, but there is something more than the mere fulfilment of a plan and purpose in the addition of our text. There is the addition which a tree makes to itself year by year, till it expands from the seed to the full majesty of perfect treehood. That addition is determined from within, not merely an addition from without, and by an external agency. It is an unfolding from within, it is an addition by which the tree has mastered material once external to itself, transformed it, lifted it to a higher level and made it part of itself. That is nearer the meaning of our text. Yet one more attempt to find the full meaning of this addition. It is like that which a boy or girl make to themselves from the day of their birth till they come to the fulness of the stature of perfect manhood and womanhood. They grow by striving, by winning the victory over external matter; they

grow till they attain to fulness of bodily stature. But they grow also by feeling, wishing, desiring, by willing and acting, by foreseeing ends and taking means to realise them. They grow by feeling, thinking, willing. And to this kind of growth there is no end. This will help us to think out what is meant by the unfolding of faith.

Unfold your faith and it becomes manliness. But take "faith" in all the breadth and depth of its Scripture meaning. We are so apt to make narrow what the Scriptures have not made narrow, and to make wide what the Scriptures have not made wide. When your faith unfolds itself, it is not a process similar to that by which a house is built. It is not as if you were adding something to something in an external manner. No doubt there is some truth in that thought, for ye are God's building. But ye are also God's husbandry. We are so ready to make faith to mean only the faith which justifies, to limit it to one function, and to fail to recognise its universal character and its great function. It is true that the receiving and resting on Jesus Christ for salvation is one of the great characteristics of faith, but the meaning of faith is wider than that. It is that which makes us at home in God's eternal world; it is that which enables us to endure as seeing Him who is invisible; it is that which enables us to grasp with

firm, unwavering hand the realities of God's eternal world, and to feel at home in His unseen presence. It gives us power to grasp the eternal principles of the righteousness, truth, and love of God. Not to dwell further on this universal function of faith, let us ask what springs from it when it has had fair play, when it unfolds itself according to its own inherent nature. Faith becomes manliness.

"Manliness" has a wider meaning than "virtue." In some ways "virtue" is the proper translation of the Greek word, but the Christian should remember that the meaning of human nature has been deepened and widened beyond reckoning since the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. Christ Jesus is a revelation of the possibility of human nature, and it has become a new thing since He took our nature on Himself. So when we speak of manliness in the Christian sense we mean manliness after the type introduced into life by Jesus Christ. It is not the Greek or Roman type of character that is here meant, not the life of self-assertion, of mere courage, or of that tendency which says the race is to the swift, the battle to the strong, and the weakest to the wall, but the kind of life which realises itself in service, which spends itself in saving others, which has as its ideal the life of Him who when He was reviled, reviled not again, who came not to be

ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Faith feeds on that ideal ; it contemplates Christ ; it dwells on the vision of Him who went about doing good, and with open face it beholds the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory. For we live by admiration, love, and fear, and we become like that which commands our highest assent. Thus faith unfolds itself and becomes like the object which commands its admiration, assent, and love. The manliness of Christ commends itself to the Christian heart, when it has once learned to value it rightly. No doubt it requires to be learnt, for it reverses the usual and ordinary ideals of man. It puts last what men have put first, and it puts first what they have put last. But the reversal of human judgments is a commonplace of Christianity. We must learn, and we do learn that the ideal of true humanity is that which was embodied in the life of Christ, and taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Of the excellence of that manhood we do not speak further here, we take it for granted at present. But we lay stress on the fact that the first unfolding of faith issues in the making of the believing man into a new fashion of humanity, a humanity like that of Christ. If faith has fair play, if it is allowed to do its perfect work, it becomes man-

liness, and works out in man the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Unfold your faith and it becomes manliness, and still further it becomes knowledge. "This is life eternal that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is the new manhood growing conscious of itself, learning its own ways, its own springs of action, its own ideals, and its means of realising its ends. It is a knowledge that grows out of life. It reflects and tries to understand something of its way of living, its way of acting, and strives to think out the principles of its life and action. The rugged maxims hewn out of life, and polished to roundness and smoothness by frequent action, grow into fixed and definite knowledge. It is the usual and fruitful way of human knowledge in general. It begins at the right end. It is simply thinking out into clearness the principles on which human life is based, and stating them clearly and making them the basis of further action. We are coming to understand something of this principle, and we are beginning to teach our children knowledge, and to make them see how knowledge grows out of action. Not abstract principles first, but concrete practice, and then the principles that grow out of practice. Such knowledge as the blacksmith has of iron, as the joiner has of wood,

as any man has of the material of his work—such is the knowledge commended here. Faith is the proof that a man is living; faith has its results in the new character, in the new humanity, and knowledge reflecting on life and on the new character comes to know itself and its principles of action, and so leads on to more assured action. There is no limit to thinking and to the progress which comes from thinking, only thinking must always keep hold of life, must never forget that after all thinking is only a form of living. Out of manliness knowledge.

Out of knowledge comes self-control. So I render the word “temperance,” and advisedly so. The meaning of the word rendered “temperance” is very wide. When we think of temperance our minds naturally turn to that form of temperance which consists in refusing to have anything to do with strong drink. The battle with that form of intemperance is so close, the results of that kind of intemperance are so deadly, that one does not wonder that it has usurped the whole meaning of the word. But the word “temperance” has a much wider meaning in Scripture. It means self-control all round. It means that we have learned to know what is the Christian ideal of life, and to know what helps and what hinders the growth of that life. It means that we are never to put the means in the place of the end. It means

that I am to use all things which will help me to live a Christian life and fulfil my life calling, and that I am to avoid the use of all things whatsoever which will hinder or prevent me from living a Christ-like life. Thus self-control is closely related to knowledge ; it grows out of knowledge, it is using Christian knowledge for the guidance of life. What is the end of life? Happily in Scotland we have not to travel far to find an answer. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." We use those things which help us to glorify God ; we shun whatever incapacitates us from that service. We must eat in order to live, we must not live in order to eat. We must drink in order to live, we must not live in order to drink. We must dress in order to live, we must not live in order to dress. We must make money in order to live, we must not live in order to make money. So of all other forms of human activity, whatever forms these may take. Self-control never allows us to put the means in the place of the end. We must be men in Christ, we must never allow ourselves to become mere professional men. Not mere soldiers, nor mere politicians, nor makers of money, nor artists, nor poets, nor philosophers, nor theologians ; but all these pursuits are to be in the service of life, and for the furtherance of the new humanity which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Temperance means self-control, to be master of yourself, of your work ; it means that you are to use things and not allow them to use you ; it means that you are to attain fulness of life and activity, in order that you may glorify God and that you may enjoy Him for ever.

Out of self-control patience—patience with yourself and patience with other people. I do not know what you think about patience, but to me it is the rarest thing under the sun. I have never met a patient man. I have never met one whose patience did not break down somewhere. I have never read of a patient man. Moses was called the meekest of men, and no doubt he did bear up wonderfully under his many provocations ; but his patience gave way more than once, for he broke the tables in his haste, and in his haste he smote the rock, when he ought simply to have spoken to it. Job has been called the most patient of men, but even Job, under the torment of his painful disease, under the wrong-headed argumentation of his friends, and under the nagging of his wife, lost self-control and cursed his day. There has never been a patient man on earth, save the Man who did all things well.

But patience grows out of self-control. It grows with the growth of the new nature. Such growth might be illustrated in many ways. I have known

men become impatient with themselves, and bring on themselves much gratuitous misery, because they were not able all at once to overcome an inveterate fault, or to secure an ideal attainment. I have known men become impatient with other people because of some shortcoming. I have known ministers to be impatient with their congregations, and congregations with their ministers. I have known men become impatient with the arrangements of Providence, and utter impatient sayings about the weather. I have known men impatient with the government of the world, yea, I find that impatience finding expression in the prayers of the congregation, in the hymns they sing, and sometimes in the sermons which are preached.

We are apt to grow impatient when we take shortsighted views of things. We are ready to become impatient with our boys and girls because they are so young, and bear the signs of youth. We become impatient with the slow progress of humanity, impatient with the sin and misery of the world, so impatient that we forget that the world is only in the making. Be patient with yourself in your warfare with sin and temptation, and try to remember that you can win the victory over sin only by watchful care. Be patient with the government of the world. Remember how long it took the human race to learn one of the first principles of Christianity, that a man

is a man, and not a thing to be bought and sold. Remember that God is working for eternity, and has eternity to work in. It takes centuries to make an oak tree, things without worth complete their life-course in a day or a week or a year. As for yourself, have patience with yourself, for you are building up a character which shall have eternal worth. Have patience with God in the working out of His purpose, for He is making a kingdom which shall endure for ever, and shall need no further change of principle. Be patient with other people, and out of that patient expectation try to help them, so that they may rise to the height of the ideal you have formed for them. Let us learn to be patient as the Father in heaven is patient.

This leads to the further stage. Out of patience God-likeness. Man is in the image of God, and may become like God. It is instructive that patience is the quality that immediately precedes God-likeness in this upward flight of Christian quality of character. There are features of character which belong exclusively to God, in which man can never become like God. For God is unique. He is the Source of all power; He is eternal, He is almighty, He is present everywhere. And finite beings can never resemble Him in these respects. But the mere infinite of quantity has nothing to do with moral and spiritual

attributes. We may be like God in patience, we may be like Him in love. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Ye may become like God in His love to men, in His patience and forbearance with men, in His hopefulness for them, and in His toil and labour for them, as He strives to win them for Himself, and to make them make themselves fit for the kingdom of God.

Out of God-likeness unfolds love of the brotherhood—the love of a man because he is a man in Christ. On what principles do men usually form their friendships? Friendships are formed perhaps because you are members of the same family, because the ties of a common kinship have bound you together, because you were companions at school, because you were thrown together at college, or learned your apprenticeships together. Thus thrown together, you found that you had pleasure in their company, you admired their brilliant qualities, you were won by their beauty, or you loved the same pursuits. You were attracted by the likeness to yourself, or you were attracted by the difference. At all events, your friendships were formed on grounds such as these. But the love of the brotherhood is

the love of a man because he is a man in Christ. It is a great test of Christian character to be able to discern the likeness to Christ in a man, and to love that and nothing else but that in him. For there may be much in a Christian which may be unattractive. For many Christians are imperfectly mended. Some of them may be censorious, some may be cantankerous, and some of them may be disagreeable. It is something to be able to neglect all these elements of repulsion, and to see the root of the matter in an imperfect Christian, and love it. Then how great a thing it is to love the brotherhood simply because of the likeness to Christ in them, and to love them the more, the more they are like Christ. No wonder though this is placed high in the unfolding of faith. As we think on it we find that it has in it all the characteristics of all the stages of the unfolding of faith which has come under our notice in this meditation.

Finally, there comes the perfecting of faith which is love. Love to all that needs love, love as God loves whose tender mercies are over all His works. Love not merely to the deserving, to the attractive, to the good, and to the brotherhood, but to the undeserving, the unworthy, to the sinful, and to the unattractive. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. So faith in God grows and

unfolds itself till the love which is the essential characteristic attribute of God passes into the Christian heart, and man becomes God-like in his patience, forbearance, in active goodness and energetic love. Thus unfold faith till it becomes love, and higher than this it cannot go. Faith, then, in its unfolding becomes manliness, and knowledge, and self-mastery, and patience, and godliness, and love of the brotherhood, and love. If these, then, are the outgrowth of faith, if we believe that such is the path of its progress, there is something to be said on the other side. If faith has its unfolding, then there is also an unfolding of the contrary of faith. There is no standing still in life, either in the upbuilding of character or in anything else. If love is the culmination of faith, then hatred is the culmination of unbelief. Nay, there is a correspondence between the unfolding of faith and the unfolding of unbelief. Here, on a level, as it were, are faith and unbelief, and you can cross on the level from one platform to the other. But presently there is a change. Faith hath its work, and produces in the man a new humanity after the type of the humanity of Christ. But unbelief has also had its work, and produces something unlike Christ. Here manliness, and on the other hand what from the Christian point of view is unmanliness. A little later, and manliness becomes

knowledge, knowledge of God, of Christ, of divine things, and of the Divine nature within the new man; and unbelief has become ignorance of all these, and specially of the divine possibilities of manhood. Out of knowledge comes self-mastery, and out of ignorance comes lack of self-control. The man cannot master his passions, cannot rule his feelings, cannot direct his purposes; he is at the mercy of his inward nature or of the things which use him. Progress in the evolution of faith becomes patience, and a hopefulness which expects the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. And far removed are the outcome of unbelief and its fearful fruits: fierce impatience with himself, resentment at the whole world, resistance mostly ineffectual against the tide that bears him on and down, and hopelessness of anything better—this is the corresponding stage of unbelief. God-likeness is the next stage of the unfolding of faith, and ungodlikeness the corresponding stage on the other. So the two are becoming farther and farther apart, and the difficulty of passing from the one to the other is constantly increasing. Then to love of the brotherhood comes the corresponding contrast, hatred of the brotherhood. Hatred to them because they are like Christ, and a hatred which increases the more the greater is the resemblance. Then comes the final contrast. On the one hand, there

118 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

is the pure white light of love, in which all the graces of Christian character and achievement are gathered into a beautiful and mysterious unity—and that is heaven. On the other hand, the awful malignity of hate, in which all the potencies of evil seem to gather themselves, which is the consummation of evil, as love is the crown of good—and that is hell. We are somewhere on this ascending and descending line, would it not be well for us seriously to consider the matter, and ascertain where we are, and decide accordingly?

VIII

BUNDLES OF BENEFITS

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good.”—Ps. ciii. 2-5.

THIS Psalmist set himself, one day, to count up the benefits he had received from God. He had not proceeded very far when he found himself to be engaged in an impossible task. He found he could not count the blessings he had received in a single day, how then could he number the blessings of a week, of a month, of a year, of the years of his life? He might as well try to count the number of the stars or the grains of sand on the seashore. It could not be done.

But, if he could not number them all, he might at least try not to forget them all. He might try to remember some of them. But this was also a hard task. For memory is weak, and the blessings were

many and manifold. How can he help himself not to forget? How shall he help himself to remember those benefits which he valued most highly? He set himself to find a help to memory, helps not to forget. So he fell upon a plan which he found to be most helpful, and which others ever since have found to be so. He took those benefits which he desired not to forget, and he tied them up in bundles. It was a very simple and easy plan, but like all things great it was simple after it was discovered, but difficult to find beforehand. He tied them up in bundles. He might not remember all that was tied up in each bundle, but he could not forget the bundle. It is the plan we all take when we travel. We tie the things we take with us on our journey into bundles, and we remember the number of the bundles. We know when we change trains, or change from land to sea, or from sea to land, that if we have the number of the bundles we have also all that is in them. So, in order not to forget, the Psalmist tied up the bundles of benefits he desired to remember. Then he took a further step in order to make sure that he would not forget them. He shaped the bundles into a song. A song is the easiest of all things to remember. Men found that out long ago. The oldest things in any language I know about is song. It is the oldest thing in the Bible, for the

Book of the Wars of Jehovah and the Book of Jashur are quoted in the Pentateuch and in the historical books of the Bible. It is the oldest thing in Greek, in Latin, and not to multiply examples, it is the oldest thing in Gaelic. Songs made by poets whose names are forgotten, songs sung and recited at the fireside when the day's work is done, songs sung at public gatherings of the people, and handed down from father to son throughout the generations—these are the oldest things in human literature, and are still among the things which form the inspiration of human life.

So the Psalmist made new use of this old plan, and shaped the bundles he had made into a song, which people could sing by the wayside as they journeyed, could carry with them to their work, and brood over in their hours of leisure. The easiest thing to remember, the most difficult thing to forget, is just a song. We ought to take heed as to the kind of songs we allow to enter into our minds, for it is not easy to get rid of a bad song, nor is it easy to measure the inspiration for good which may come from a good song. By tying the benefits up in bundles, and by shaping them into a song, the Psalmist earned for himself the undying gratitude of future generations. Specially has he earned for himself our gratitude, for he gave us a song which

122 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

we sing in Scotland to-day, and have sung for more than three hundred years, when our religious emotions are at their highest and their best. We sing this song when the feeling of consecration has been renewed, widened, and deepened by communion with God at His table. I never was at a communion time at which this song has not been sung, and no other song could do justice to the feelings of gratitude of the Lord's people. So we sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth, who healeth, who redeemeth, who crowneth, and who satisfieth."

Let us open the bundles and examine them. Let us count their number. There are five of them, the number of the fingers on one hand. As we look steadfastly at them, we see that they are divided into three and two. The first three are bound together by a common reference to sin and the consequences of sin. The last two reveal to us how God would deal with His people if sin were taken out of the way. Take them in their order as they lie before us in the psalm.

1. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Note how the Psalmist begins. He begins with iniquity. Where else could a sinful man begin? The most needful of all things for a sinful man is to get rid of his sin. So the Psalmist begins there. This beginning is not peculiar

to him, it is the common note of the Bible. In fact, we come across here one of the distinctive peculiarities of the Bible. One may read other literatures and never come across the notion of sin in them. Crime, blunders, mistakes, miseries enough one may find, but sin as estrangement from a holy personal God who loves man and would serve him one never finds. But in the Bible you are face to face with sin from first to last. One chapter and a bit of another are given to the story of the making of the world and the making of man, and then the story of the entrance of sin is told, and the reader is kept face to face with sin in every part of it. In the Gospel story we read at the outset that "He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins"; and in John almost the first word about Him is, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." It is characteristic of the Bible to keep its reader face to face with sin and its consequences, till he is stirred up to the effort to get rid of it.

So the Psalmist begins with sin, and the first bundle is made up of the grace of God in relation to sin. It is, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." How great a fact this is we can scarcely realise. The forgiveness of sins is one of the greatest wonders of Christian experience. Sin, iniquity, transgression,

the thing I can make, ah, so easily, and never can unmake; the thing I can do in a moment and never can undo; and yet it must be unmade and undone if goodness is to be realised in human life. How can I unsin my sin? How can I undo what I have done? There is no answer from the world of ordinary human experience, there is silence from philosophy and science; these are inclined to say that what is written is written, and no effort of man can ever unwrite it. But the forgiveness of sins, if it be possible, lifts us into another sphere than that ruled by the ordinary law of cause and effect. It tells us that a man may make a new beginning, that he may turn over a new leaf, that his future may not be a copy of his past. The forgiveness of sins is possible, for it is one of the surest facts of real experience. So the Psalmist, and so he places it at the very beginning of his thanksgiving.

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” As we think of this and the greatness of the fact, we begin to apprehend the wonder and the difficulty of it. For we often speak as if the forgiveness of sins were an easy matter. We who preach, in our anxiety to get our hearers to ask for the forgiveness, are inclined to speak as if forgiveness were to be had for the asking. So it is, yet the difficulty is to ask for what is so freely given. Consider what must happen ere a man

really asks for the forgiveness of his sins. He must be broken down, must have given up all hope of earning his own salvation, must be content to receive, without merit of his own, forgiveness for sins for which he could never atone. That is hard, so hard that men must feel the burden of their sins to be intolerable ere they ask forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard to take, it is also hard to give. To forgive others is good and great, but what if forgiveness would be unwise! what if forgiveness would serve only as a point of departure on a new course of wickedness! Thus the problem of forgiveness is a hard one, and we have here a new vision of the truth of the saying, "Who can forgive sins save God only?" But forgiveness is possible and a fact, and according to our text all sins must be dealt with. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." All must be dealt with, and forgiven. One sin undealt with, one iniquity unforgiven, means that forgiveness has not taken place. One wound kills a man; one leak sinks a ship; and one sin undealt with means the same as if none were dealt with. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." They are cast when forgiven into the depths of the forgetfulness of God.

2. "Who healeth all thy diseases." Sin has its consequences, and one of them is disease. Sin, disease, destruction; thus flow on the sad and inevitable

results of sin. We easily realise the fact that a blow leaves a bruise, and a wound leaves a scar ; we are not so sure of the truth that every sin brings disease. Once a prophet said, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." When we read these words, we are inclined to say these are Oriental figures of speech, exaggerated metaphors. If our spiritual vision were as keen as that of the prophet, we should find that he was speaking what he knew. Sin then makes disease, and God's relation to disease is described as that of healing. In the Scriptures this relation is described so fully that it gives a distinctive name for God, Jehovah the Healer. He not only forgives sin, He also so deals with the results of sin that He removes every trace of sin. He heals all their diseases. This is so clear that we need not dwell further on it.

3. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." On the one hand the final outcome of sin is destruction, on the other hand the culmination of God's action in relation to sin is redemption. It reminds one of Paul's magnificent word, "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is the crown of redeeming grace, and fitly describes the Divine action in reversing the process and results of sin. It is no

meagre word which is here spoken, nor does it describe any limited or partial action. Thy whole life is redeemed, thy life in all its features, in all its activities, in all its parts, capacities, and faculties. Redemption is not merely the reversion of the action and results of sin, it is so construed and so carried out, that it makes the man all the more complete, just because the effects of sin have been undone. Much might be said on the fulness of redemption. It means the redemption of the whole complex personality of man, in all the manifoldness of his being. It is not a redemption of the soul, nor of the body; it is the redemption of both, of the whole man. Redemption from destruction—yes, but it has also the positive side, the promise that Christ shall present His people to the Father perfect, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Christ shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be transformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able to subject all things to himself." So rich in gracious possibilities is this bundle of the Psalmist's, and so great are the things which he has tied up in it.

So far the Psalmist has been thinking of God's action as it is defined in relation to sin. Now his thoughts take a grander flight, and he thinks of the Divine action when sin is taken out of the way, and

no longer presents a barrier to the fellowship between God and His people. His words take on a finer meaning, and mould themselves into a more musical form. For he tries to represent the intercourse between God and the children of God when sin is removed from between them.

4. "Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." These words are about the most musical and poetic in the whole Bible, and they are as fine in meaning as they are in form. Let us take the meaning slowly, part by part, and bit by bit. Note how the translators of the psalm have been constrained to tie two English words together in order to set forth the meaning of the original. These translators of the Bible were poets as well as scholars. They took the two words "love" and "kindness" and tied them together in order to shut out the weaker meanings of both, and from the union of them set forth a higher and better meaning than either could alone express. Love has always been recognised to be the strongest and best thing in the world of life, and in recent years it has come even to larger recognition. It really holds society together, is at the basis of family life, is the motive power of the highest activities of mankind. But while love is so and acts so, it may partake of the weakness or the selfishness of human nature. It may become fierce, jealous, regardless of

the interest of the person who is friend sympathetic-look at the person merely as belonging wisdom, of your fiercely insist on exclusive possession. With to the work love would labour, toil, and spend itself firmer resolution of the person loved. But all love is not it is a good, may have more ferocity than kindness in it. And people fierce side of love is shut out, and only the id good a is kept, and kept by uniting it with kindness. So kindness is apt to be weak, injudicious, and foolish. It is the kindness, perhaps, of a fond young mother who gives the baby whatever it desires, cloy it with sweets, or gives it unwholesome food because the child likes it, or, as George MacDonald suggests, gives the child a lighted candle because it cries for it. This foolish side of kindness is shut out by tying it to the firmer, wiser fact of love. So united, kindness becomes loving-kindness, and the two become, in their union, something higher and better than either of the two elements contained in it, when these are taken by themselves.

Take the other phrase, "tender mercies." Mercy in itself is one of the grandest things in human nature. It is not mere feeling, it is feeling in action. It is not mere sympathy or pity, it is sympathy made alive and active. It is not pity, it is pity going forth into action, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort the sorrowful, to make the widow's heart to sing for

joy. But tender mercy is even more than mercy, great and good though the exercise be. It is mercy exercised in the most tender way. For mercy may be exercised in such a way as to wound the feelings of the person to whom you are merciful. You may intend to help your friend who has fallen into misfortune. He may have been blameworthy, his misfortune may have arisen from his want of thought, from his recklessness, or even from wrong-doing. You intend to help him, but you are annoyed with his conduct; you insist on showing him how foolish he was, how reckless was his conduct, how unprincipled was his motive, until he almost feels that he would be without the help if he could be free from the scolding. Or you are merciful to the person who asks you for help, but you fling the penny to him across the street. It is possible in this way to undo all the effects of a merciful action by the ungracious way in which it is done. Mercy according to our text is exercised tenderly. You help your friend, or come to the assistance of those who are in poverty and need, in such a way as to bind up their wounds, as to cheer them, and to give them courage to begin the battle of life anew, though life heretofore has been all a failure. For the mercy which man shows to man interprets for man the tender mercies of God. After that interview with you, during which you

entered into the sorrow of your friend sympathetically and tenderly, gave him of your wisdom, of your experience, of your means, he goes forth to the work of life again with a new outlook, with a firmer resolution to do well. He says to himself, "It is a good, kind world after all, and there are good, kind people in it; I must show myself worthy to live in so good a world, and worthy of the help I have received." So tender mercies help, but they help in such a way as to bind up the broken-hearted, and to open a door of hope for those who have failed, and to give them courage to lift them above the feeling of despair.

It is with loving-kindness and tender mercies that God crowns His people. The very word "crowns" suggests something great and worthy. We crown our king with an outward crown, and that is only the symbol of the loyalty, love, and devotion of our hearts. God crowns with loving-kindness and tender mercies, and these are the highest expression of the loving interest which God has in His people. This is how He deals with them when sin is out of the way, when it no longer estranges God from man. This would always be the relation between God and man, for God delighteth in mercy. But sin has separated between us and our God, and restrains God's action of loving-kindness and tender mercies until it is taken out of the way. Then the action of God is such as

to make the recipient of His love cry out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Note the kinds of benefits which the Psalmist delights to remember. Loving-kindness and tender mercies. These are of the kind which can be given away and kept. There is a kind of wealth which cannot be given away and kept. Material wealth is of that kind. There is nothing personal or distinctive in it. It is equally at home in any pocket. If I have it, you have it not; if I give it away, I no longer have it. But there is a wealth of another kind. Intellectual wealth, moral wealth, spiritual wealth. One man thinks a thought, and men speedily travel across the world in steamships and railways, and the old idea of distance is changed. Another man thinks, and the lightning becomes the servant of man, and conveys his meaning around the world. One man lives a life of devoted goodness, and immediately all men are enriched because their ideal of the possibility of goodness is enhanced beyond reckoning. In truth, in the world of mind wealth is kept because it is given away. If it is not given away it is lost, not only to others, but he who owned it has lost command of it, simply by not using it. A teacher knows the lesson he has taught better after he has taught it than he did before, and the children have it as well. This sermon is no less mine, but more mine, after I

have preached, and it is yours as well. So God crowns His people with loving-kindness and tender mercies, and He is richer in these after He has crowned them than He was before.

5. "Satisfieth thy mouth with good." The word "crowneth" suggests something external, something coming to us from without, and after the crowning there may conceivably be some wants unsupplied, some needs of man which have not been met. But the note of Christianity is that no human needs are left unsatisfied. "My God shall supply all your need." Satisfied with good, so that every need shall be met, this is the promise. Reaching forward from what this Psalmist saw of the goodness of God to the larger vision of human need and its satisfaction set forth in and by Christ, we read a wider meaning into our text, and make it absolute. The thirst of the mind for truth, the thirst of the will and conscience for guidance, and the thirst of the heart for life are satisfied through Him who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. If there were needs which He could not or would not satisfy, He would have told us of them. For He said to His disciples, in a relation altogether similar to that we are considering, "If it were not so, I would have told you." So there is a revelation of the fulness of Christ, and of the satisfaction He giveth to His people, in what He has said, but

also in what He has not said. He would have told us if it were not so, if our desires and expectations were to be disappointed. Thus in this fifth bundle there are many things for which the Psalmist might well be grateful. We also may be grateful, not only for what is expressed in it, but for the promise of larger blessings yet in store for us in the days to come. The benefits already experienced are but the germs of the larger benefits yet to come, when our enlarged hearts shall demand higher satisfactions, and will receive them. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

We have thus seen some of the benefits which the Psalmist tied up in bundles and shaped into a song in order that he might not forget God's benefits. What think ye of his plan? Have you found it to be good in your own experience? Or let me ask, have you ever felt the imperative need of some such plan? In other words, have you ever tried to count up the benefits you have received from God? Surely you have had mercies at His hand, blessings from the Giver of all good. Or are you of those who are always reckoning up the blessings which other people have received, and reckoning up your own miseries? There are such people. They look at themselves

from picturesque points of view, and take a strange kind of pleasure in the thought that they are exceptionally miserable. Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow? is their constant inquiry. It is an unhealthy state of mind, and it is productive of misery to themselves and of unhappiness to other people. Place the problem of the Psalmist before you, think of the blessings of life given and life continued, of seedtime and harvest and summer and winter, of health and the power of work, of your delight in this fair world and of the harvest of beauty your eye may reap each sunrise and sunset; think above all of the fact that though you are poor and needy yet the Lord thinketh on you, and of the thousand other reasons you have for thankfulness, and you will begin to think highly of the Psalmist's problem, and of the plan he fell on to help him not to forget all the benefits he had received from God. With him you will say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth, who healeth, who redeemeth, who crowneth, and who satisfieth."

IX

THE GROUND OF FEARLESSNESS

“Fear not ; I am the first and the last, and the Living One ; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”—REV. i. 17-18 (Revised Version).

THE “Fear nots” of Scripture are part of the inheritance of the Christian. For the word of God stands, and a promise once made is made for ever. A word meant to inspire hope and sustain courage in anyone, at any time, is a word for all who are in similar circumstances. We may comfort and strengthen ourselves, and ascertain the greatness of our inheritance, by gathering together and thinking over the “Fear nots” of Scripture. That, however, would be too large a work at present. Let us limit ourselves to the “Fear not” of our text.

Being in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, John heard the voice that spake with him, and having turned he saw the vision which he records: the vision of the seven golden candlesticks, and of the One like unto a Son of Man who was in the midst of the candlesticks.

There was a great contrast between the vision which disclosed itself to the mind of John as he turned to see it, and the memory which he cherished of the Lord as He was when John walked with Him in Palestine, or when he leaned on the breast of Jesus at the supper table. John was the beloved disciple, who was on terms of exceptional intimacy with his Master, but when he saw the risen and ascended Saviour he was so impressed that he fell at His feet as one dead. Overcome by the splendour of the vision, overwhelmed with the majesty of the Saviour, he fell at His feet as dead. "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

In thinking out this subject, one thing presses on the mind as to the ground of deliverance from fear. It is well to note it here before we consider the grounds of fearlessness in detail. It is to be observed that when He says to John "Fear not," He directs the feeling and thought not to anything in John himself, or to anything in his circumstances; on the contrary, He directs the mind of John to Himself. The ground of confidence is altogether in the Lord Himself. It is in the touch of His right hand, in the hearing of the voice of Jesus, in the steadfast regard

of what Jesus is, of what Jesus has done, and in the apprehension of the place that Jesus fills, and of the power that Jesus wields, that John is to find the ground of his fearlessness and steadfast confidence. This is one of the commonplaces of Christian experience. Not in ourselves, not in our attainments, nor in our circumstances, nor in anything that is ours, can we find any sure ground of confidence or of deliverance. It is in Christ and in Him alone that a Christian can find peace and rest. While we look at Him, while we steadfastly contemplate Him, and dwell on His perfection, on His work, on the gracious relation He condescends to bear to us, we are safe from inward perturbation and from hesitation and doubt. While we look at Him, we live, we make progress, we grow into His likeness.

The meaning of the text grows on us as we dwell on it. As we hear the striking words, and let their meaning and their particulars sink into our minds, a wonderful vista of great meanings opens to our view. "Fear not, for I am the Living One; fear not, for I became dead; fear not, for I have the keys of death and of Hades." As we think the matter out into detail, we find ourselves thinking of life, of death, and of what comes after death. We know that we live, that we are to die, that there is something after death. There must be in the words of the Lord,

words which lay stress on His living, on His dying, and on His power over death and Hades, a meaning that refers to our life, to our death, and to what shall come after death. So we may sum the matter up in these heads. 1. "Fear not to live; I am the Living One." 2. "Fear not to die; I was dead." 3. "Fear not what comes after death; I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades."

1. "Fear not to live; I am the Living One." It might be possible for us to say thoughtlessly, Is it necessary to dwell on this, for who fears to live? It is not life which anyone fears; it is the difficulties, perplexities, the hindrances of life which one fears and dreads. Life is pleasant, familiar, we are at home with it, and it is only that which threatens life or the enjoyment of it that awakens fear. That is the first impulse when this situation opens out before the mind. But a little reflection enables us to take a new attitude, and to correct our first impressions. For to every thoughtful man life has its responsibilities, its cares, and its possibilities. Shall I be able to live worthily, to make a fit use of my opportunities? Shall I be able to live a rich, full, and gracious life, and be equal to the duties and the responsibilities which may devolve upon me? As we reflect on this, as we think out the situations and possibilities that open out to us as life proceeds and new horizons are disclosed,

we feel the gracious power of this word, "Fear not to live ; for I am the Living One." It is as if the Lord said, "Fear not to live ; I share your life. Through Me you will be able to grasp the opportunities of life, you will rise to the height of your calling, and when duty calls you will be able to answer all its demands. You will be able to say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'"

Let us glance at the possibilities of life, and see how welcome this word ought to be to us, as life grows, and new situations arise in it. For life is full of change, and every change reveals a new opportunity of growth, and calls for new powers of adaptation, and makes a new demand for work. Scarcely has a child become accustomed to the atmosphere of the home, scarcely has he learnt to know his mother's face and to be at home in the family circle, than he is thrust forth into the strange circle of the school, and he has to become acquainted with the new faces and the new discipline of the larger life. He is in surroundings which are altogether strange. New faces are seen, new voices are heard, new words with new meanings are heard ; a new rule has to be learned and obeyed, and the strain of living becomes more acute. But with the new life come the new powers which it is fitted and intended to call forth. In the transition between the new time and the old

the word of power is welcome if the boy can hear it, "Fear not to live; I am the Living One." So in the growing experiences which make up our life, in the change from one situation to another, it would be well if we learnt to recognise the voice that ever speaks to us. "Fear not to live; I am the Living One." It speaks to us when we leave the safe shelter of our homes to go forth to the pressing duties of new spheres, when we leave our father's house to visit strange, unfriendly cities, or new lands. It is well that like Jacob, but in a deeper sense than he ever knew, we meet with our Lord in a Bethel of our own, and find that wheresoever we go we do not pass beyond the hearing of this gracious voice, "Fear not to live; for I am the Living One."

Nor is it necessary to pass into strange surroundings in order to feel the need of such a voice as this. New situations open up for those also who do not leave their fatherland. It may be that slowly the ideal of what your life and life-work ought to be rises before you, and the vision of your youth broadens before your mind, and becomes more practical, and begins to seem attainable, and you feel called on to find means for the attainment of that great end. Slowly it is borne in upon you that your calling must be along one line and not along another, that you must be a man of thought or a man of action, that your pro-

profession must be such and nothing else. The ideal of this calling will be largely determined by the example of the best, the brightest, and most efficient man who adorns that particular profession. What is my life-work to be, and how shall I behave in that calling? To all men there comes the feeling of the need of help in order to find his life-work and to do it. "It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the Gentiles." So said the Apostle Paul, and so must every man, in his measure, say. But if a man is to say this, he must feel that he is called by the grace of God to this particular calling, and in response to that call he will feel the need of the promise of our text, "Fear not to live; I am the Living One."

You are called to a certain work in the world, you are called to do that work—whatever it may be—in a way which will realise your own ideal, and respond to the demands which others make on you; and you feel that for that end you need a strength, a skill, and a firmness larger than you are in possession of, and here comes in the gladness of the promised help and presence of Christ. "Fear not to live"; for strength and wisdom will be given from day to day to meet the new demands arising from widening horizons and

new views of the possibilities of action. Remember what you felt as the demands of a new situation were made on you ; remember how you felt that you were bound to acknowledge publicly the claims of Christ on you, and that you were bound to take on you the burdens which loyalty to your Redeemer placed on your shoulders. You were in a strait between two. Dare I say by my actions that I am a Christian? Can I realise the Christian ideal in my life and conduct? Can I, in obedience to Christ, bring all my faculties to their highest, and then consecrate them wholly to His service? On the other hand, dare I refrain from saying that He is my Lord and Master? Dare I refuse to take up the burden of His people? So almost everyone, certainly every real disciple, will remember how he was worn out with the anxiety of a decision, and how his decision was that he must venture on the path of obedience, and must follow Christ and obey Him, though it was with fear and trembling that he made the decision. As with the great question of entering into the membership of Christ's Church, so was it with you when you were called to office in the Church. Can I live a Christian life? Can I do Christ's work? Can I rule wisely over Christ's Church? Can I preach the everlasting gospel of the grace of God? Can I speak forth a true and not inadequate representation of the living Saviour

and win men to love and serve Him? To all who have been called on to work, work which taxed strength to the uttermost, work the ideal of which filled their mind and haunted their imagination, it is clear that they would never have made the venture of accepting such work without a persuasion that strength would come with the duty. For the Christian who trusts in Christ there is the sure persuasion that with the acceptance of the call to work for Christ there will come the certainty of Christ's perpetual presence with him, and the assurance "Fear not to accept your work; fear not to live; for I am the Living One; I share your life."

2. "Fear not to die; for I was dead." Through fear of death men are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Though, under high motives and devotion to great causes, men have often subdued the fear of death, yet this fear is really a feeling common to all men. For men do not know what it is to die. It is an experience which is ever strange to men, and no one returns to tell others what it is to die. No traveller returns from the other land, and the experience of death lies before each man as new and as strange as if no one had ever had that experience. No one had ever before said, "I was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore." But Jesus Christ could say, "I am the Living One, and I was dead." He

knew what it was to die. He tasted the pangs and sorrows of death in such a dreadful form that His experience was deeper and more real than that of any one who had ever died. It is not necessary to dwell on the awfulness of His death, at least not at the present time. But it may be said that He knew all the secrets of death; every step in the valley of the shadow of death had been trodden by Him. He had passed through the deep waters, and whatsoever of secret agony lay in the experience of death had been felt by Him. Now He can say, what no one ever could have said, "I was dead, and I am alive for evermore."

In virtue of that experience and of that victory over death, the risen Lord can say to His people, "Fear not to die; for I was dead." As He said, "Fear not to live; for I am the Living One, and share your life," so He says, "Fear not to die; for I was dead, and I share your dying." Not from this passage of Scripture alone do we gather the full meaning of Christ's deliverance from the fear of death. He said in the course of His earthly ministry, "Because I live, ye shall live also." He made Himself one with His people, so much one with them that His life was their life, His dying their dying, and His work their work. The closeness of that union is illustrated on the other side as well. Their life is His life, their

dying is His dying, and their work is His work. So the apostle of the Gentiles says to the Colossian Christians, "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." So close is the unity between Christ and His people that Paul could say, "When one died for all, then all died." As we trace this thought, as set forth in its fulness in the Scriptures, we find that the fear of death is overcome because the bitterness of death is past. It is no mere figure of speech which affirms that the Christian has died when he became a Christian. Nor is it only the case that when Christ died all His people died with Him. But the other side of the twofold experience is also true. Christ shares the death of His people. He is with them in the valley of the shadow of death. It is no lonely death which they die, when body and spirit part for the time. Christ is with them, and keeps them company in their dying hour. The sting of death has been withdrawn, and the bitterness of it has been taken away. For in virtue of the faith which has made him one with Christ, a Christian has died to sin, has passed into the state where there is no more condemnation.

"Fear not to die; for I was dead," is thus to be read in the light of all the teaching of Christ and His apostles, if we are to have the full meaning of this word of confidence. It is no mere fact that is here

set forth, though it is a fact in history that Jesus died on the cross. A fact becomes a doctrine when we know the meaning and the purpose. It is not possible to set forth here the full meaning of the death, if it is possible for man to set it forth in any adequate manner. But part of the meaning of that great fact is that the death of Jesus has robbed death of its terror for all who put their trust in Him. It places the terror of it in the past, for the sting of death has been withdrawn.

3. "Fear not what comes after death; for I have the keys of death and Hades." "It is appointed to all men once to die, and after this the judgment." This is one of the oldest and most persistent of the beliefs of man. Wherever man is found, he is found with a belief in his continuance, and with a belief that the character of his life beyond the grave is closely connected with the kind of life he lived here. Belief in God and belief in immortality have always gone together. So close is the connection between them that they are often traced to one root. Spencer makes the belief in God to depend on the belief in the continued existence of ancestors. Not to argue the question here, we may accept his attempt as a proof of the fact that both beliefs are held together. But the dread of the other life, and the belief that men have to give an account of all the deeds done in the

148 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

earthly life, have added greatly to the misery of man. For all men know how much they have lived below the standard of their own ideals ; they are conscious of wrong-doing, of thoughts which they ought not to have thought, and deeds they ought not to have done. To give an account of all they have done, to believe that they must give such an account, makes them shiver with terror.

For all men are conscious of the difference between what they ought to have been and what they actually have been. They know that they have not risen to the height of their calling ; they feel that they have come short of the ideal ; nay, they feel that they have not done what they could. They have not thought truly, they have not responded to the situation with the emotion it was fitted to call forth, and they dread the time when they shall have to answer for the thinking of imperfect thoughts when they might have thought truly, when they cherished inappropriate feelings when their feelings might have responded rightly to the situation, and for the doing of wrong deeds when they might have acted rightly and in consistency with the ideal of right conduct. Nor is this all that makes them dread the righteous inexorable judgment. What shall they answer to the charge of sin, of wrong actions, of unjust deeds, and to all the defects of their lives, and all the sins they have done ? It is not

strange that men dread the judgment, for they know that they have no answer to make.

As we think of these things, we feel the power of the Master's word, "Fear not what comes after death; for I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades." The One that shares our life, the One who died for us and shares our dying, is the One before whom we shall stand at the time of final reckoning. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." Yes, but it is before the judgment-seat of Christ that we are to stand. That makes a great difference. For He has answered for His people already. "He bore their sins in his body on the tree," "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Thus for the Christian the trial and judgment are already past, the verdict has been given, and the declaration has been made, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Thus the sentence pronounced at the judgment-seat of Christ is but the declaration of that which was given when the sinner was justified freely by the grace of God. For the law looking at the sinner, sees him as it sees Christ; rather, it does not see the sinner, but it sees Him who died and rose again from the dead. The trial is past and can never be repeated, and all that needs to be said is,

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The keys of death and of Hades are in the hand of Him who is seated on the judgment-seat. "He openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth." Nor is the consolation derived from the thought that all power is in the hands of Jesus Christ. That would be an untrustworthy source of comfort. For the Christian would not desire or wish that the power should be strained on his behalf, or that an unworthy verdict should be given. For on that day it will be found that those who obtain the sentence of acquittal and of reward have become worthy of their place in the Father's kingdom. They have become the righteousness of God in Christ. They have become like Christ, have really obtained the Spirit of adoption, and have learned the language of the Father's family, and are really the sons of God. The final procedure recognises all that has been done for them, and all that is accomplished in them, and the verdict is given accordingly. Justified by grace, and yet judged according to works, is the final wonder of the Christian experience.

"Fear not what comes after death; I have the keys of death and of Hades." So we may take home the consolation of the Master's words, and gather together the wealth of our inheritance. We may live, we may

die, we may appear before the judgment-seat with confidence; for Christ liveth, who was dead, and is alive for evermore. Dwell on the richness of your inheritance. Fear not to live, fear not to die, fear not what comes after death; may we not ask, what is there that a Christian man need fear if these things are true? True they are if Christ be true and real, and if His word stands. It all depends on that. Given the reality of Christ and His abiding presence with His people, and the conclusions of our text follow with inevitable sureness. Need we doubt the fact of Christ? for if the fact of Christ be true and real, there is no room for doubt, hesitation, or fear. But that Christ is real, sure, and a fact is one of the surest of all facts for the Christian experience. It has been tested throughout the world of Christian experience in all times of sorrow and tribulation, and from all who trusted Him has come the testimony that He has never failed them. But the testimony is even more emphatic, that the Christian has gotten the victory only when he trusted Christ, and that when he trusted Christ no power was able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But if the power to live rightly, and to die in hope, and to face fearlessly what comes after death, depends altogether on Christ and on our relation to Him, then

it must be said that apart from Christ there is no power and no right in anyone to expect deliverance from the fear of life, the fear of death, or the fear of what comes after death. If we believe that confidence to face these facts comes from Christ alone, we must frankly say that there is no deliverance for those who refuse to trust Him. So we must read the words before us, in their relation to those who ignore or refuse Christ, thus: "Fear to live, fear to die, fear what comes after death." Once a man hears of Christ, he can never be again as if he had never heard of Him. "Fear to live, for I am the Living One; fear to die, for I was dead; fear what comes after death," so will run the fearful message for those who have heard of Christ, for they can never get rid of Christ. But on that we may not further dwell; we turn to the other side of the matter, and ask you Christians to serve yourselves heir to your inheritance, and to take possession of the unsearchable riches bequeathed to you, and to make yourselves sure of it by abiding ever in Him whose you are and whom you serve.

X

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE RISEN LORD

JOHN xxi.

WHAT is written in this final chapter of the Gospel according to John enables us to study the way of the risen Lord with His disciples, and thus to learn something of His way with His disciples still. For to-day He does visit His people, and His presence with them teaches them many things about Him, and about themselves. He comes to His people in many ways, and causes them to be aware of His presence whensoever He visits them. He may come in the most unexpected way and in the most unlikely places, but when He comes there is much searching of heart, a widening of the horizon, and a deepening of the life.

These disciples had gone to Galilee as He had commanded them. They were to wait for His coming. But waiting in all circumstances is hard work, and not many people can wait with patience,

courage, and hope. The disciples speedily wearied of their waiting, and grew somewhat impatient. Peter, the man who felt as they all felt, and was the first always to give expression to the mood which all of them shared, suddenly said, "I go a-fishing," and all felt that he had spoken the fitting word. "We also go with thee." They felt that the strain of waiting had grown almost insupportable. They must have something to do, to help the slowly moving moments to pass more swiftly. All of us know the strain of waiting, and how slowly the hours of waiting pass, and what fancies cross the mind and fill the heart with fear and terror. What can be the cause of the delay? We move more swiftly, we do this or that, and underneath all our nervous action is the desire that the suspense might have an end.

So, to relieve the suspense, Peter proposed, and the others agreed, to go a-fishing. They went a-fishing, and soon they were occupied in the exercise of their former calling. They had been fishermen before they had become followers of Jesus. They felt again the old excitement and the old fascination of the fisherman's calling. They cast their nets and hauled them, always with the hope of feeling the thrill which they knew long ago—the thrill of the movement of the fish as they hauled the nets. For every calling has its fascination, and none more than that of the

fisherman. The hope that renews itself after every unsuccessful attempt, the charm which the very uncertainty gives, the never-ceasing excitement of hope as they renew their efforts,—these and many other feelings were in their hearts as they pursued their former calling. Around them, too, was the old scenery; perhaps the boats were the same that once were theirs, certainly they were like the old boats; and the nets were like, and the hills around were as of old. So the old life came back to them, and everything was so near, so real, that the time they had spent with Jesus seemed to be like a dream. This night seemed to link itself with the old life, as if the old life had been the life of yesterday. The new life had become shadowy and unreal, and the old life had come back in all its intensity, and they were fishermen, and only fishermen, once more.

It was a great crisis in the life of the early Church, and it might have been the very greatest of all crises, had Jesus not come to their rescue. But He came, and He came to meet the crisis. He always comes when His people need Him. There is a similar crisis in the history of almost every one of His people. To many of them there comes the excitement and the exaltation of feeling which issues in the great change which we call conversion. At that decisive moment feeling is tumultuous, the whole

being is drawn towards the decision which the soul makes for Christ, and the exalted state of feeling is the sign of the change, and the means by which a man is enabled to make the new departure. But after the departure is made the feeling sinks down, the exaltation departs, the great emotions ebb, and the man feels as if the whole state was unreal. The old things tend to revive, the old associations renew themselves, and the old pursuits begin to look attractive. It is a crisis in the soul, and many may fail to meet it. They may try to repeat the old experience, and it cannot be repeated. They mourn and bemoan themselves because they cannot feel as they felt then, and they do not realise that the exaltation of feeling was given to them to enable them to make the new departure. What one needs when the tide of feeling has ebbed is the interest of a fresh view of truth, a fresh vision of the Lord. And so the Master, who does not lose sight of them, gives to them what they need at that crisis.

So He came to these disciples, and His coming kept them from becoming mere fishermen again. He left them to toil through the night, and with the morning light He manifested Himself to them. They had toiled through the night and had caught nothing. When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, and His voice came to them

across the waters. "Children, have ye any meat? And they answered, No. Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They cast, and they found. They had toiled all night and had caught nothing; now they caught, and they lost sight of their success in thinking of Him who had directed them to success. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was the first to recognise the Lord; and he uttered the swift, joyous word of recognition, "It is the Lord." Peter, the impetuous, the impulsive, in the excitement of the great discovery, forgot everything in that great moment. He forgot boat, and companions, and the fish which they had caught, and cast himself into the sea to come to Jesus. The Master had come to His disciples, and delivered them from their danger, and speedily they come to Him on the shore; and the crisis was past. But the interview was not to leave them in the state in which it had found them. They are to learn much through the interview, and we also may learn much from it. One thing we learn is that Jesus will not let His people go, nor will He leave them to themselves and their own resources. They learnt this from the visit itself; they realised it more vividly when they came to land. Then they found that the Lord had been thinking of them, had been working for them, and while they were toiling on the lake

He was preparing breakfast for them. Reading it to-day, it strikes us as very wonderful that the risen Lord should so toil and work for these disciples. How the sight of that fire of coals, with the fish laid thereon, and with the bread all ready for them, must have given rise to strange emotions and great thoughts in these disciples! It must have provided food for reflection to them for many days.

But that is precisely what the risen Lord is doing for His creatures all the world over. It is He that causes the grass to grow on the mountains, it is He that gives seedtime and harvest and summer and winter, that opens His hand and all His creatures are filled with food. What He did for His disciples that morning He is ever doing. Still, while this is true, it is not quite the truth of our text. Note in particular how graciously He associates the disciples with Himself as they proceed to breakfast. "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Why, they had toiled all the night and caught nothing. It was only when He directed them where to cast their nets that they found and caught the fish. So it is always. Whatever we have, we have received from Him. The loyal heart and true, the cleansed conscience, the enlightened intelligence, the firm and resolute will which a redeemed man brings to His service, are all from

Him; but when the man exercises these in the service of the Lord, He reckons them as his. When we bring our gifts to Him, though we received them all from Him, He calls them ours. He forgets that they were ever His own. He sees in them only the love, the loyalty, the fidelity which prompted them.

From all these things we learn much of the way of the risen Lord to His disciples and with them. But we learn much more from what follows. An interview with Jesus means much, as we shall see. It brings many things to their remembrance. It brings back the memory of former times, of fellowship with Him, of gracious concentrated times when the feeling of consecration was strong, and they felt that they could devote themselves wholly to His service. So it is with the disciples who were with Jesus at this memorable scene at the Galilean lake. Specially is this the case with Peter, on whom our attention is fixed during the rest of the interview. The whole scene, and all its surroundings, were fitted, if indeed it was not intended, to bring back to the mind of Peter some periods of his life which ought to have made an abiding impression on his mind. The lake itself, the surroundings, the night of fruitless toil, the sudden appearance of the Master, the command to cast the nets into the deep, the sudden

and unexpected success that followed on obedience to the word of Jesus—all these would bring back to Peter the former scene, when Jesus called him to be a fisher of men. It would bring vividly before him, also, the feelings of reverence and awe which filled his heart then, and the cry which issued from his lips, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Can we hesitate to say that all these memories, and many others, were in the mind of Peter as he looked at the Master and out at the lake? Thought is swift, and may overtake the memories of a life in a single moment. And Peter felt these swift waves of memory, and as they swept over his mind they carried with them reminiscences of all the past, memories of gracious states of mind, of feelings of consecration, ay, and memories of failure, and of weakness and selfishness.

Another feature of the scene was fitted to bring before his mind feelings still more poignant, more painful, and more bitter. That feature would bring to him the memory of the events of a certain night, which others might generously allow to pass into the background, which the Lord would forgive and forget, but which Peter could never cease to remember with shame and pain. "The fire of coals," the word translated so, is the same as that used to describe the fire in the high priest's hall at which

Peter stood and warmed himself on the night of the denial of his Lord. It seems to me that Peter could never see a fire of that kind again without living over again the awful time when, taken by surprise, he was called on to testify to his discipleship, and was not equal to the opportunity. When he ought to have stood by his Master, he denied Him. His conduct called forth that look from Christ, that sorrowful look, which Peter could never forget, and the remembrance of those tears which he remorsefully shed would ever abide with him. But the sight of that fire of coals brought back to Peter the memories of that awful night, and his heart is riven with the keenness of these memories, even before the Lord began to speak to him and to ask questions.

Keen and vivid as were the memories which the circumstances already noted brought to Peter, they were little in comparison with the tide of sorrowful thoughts awakened in him by the questions which Jesus put to him during the next few moments. "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" It is a searching question, and the more we think of it the greater becomes its range of meaning. It is significant that the name by which the Master addresses him is not the name which He Himself gave him, but the name by which he was known to men before the Master called him.

Not "Cephas," the man of rock, but "Simon," the natural man—the man as he stood in his own native strength. For of late Peter had allowed the native element to obtain the mastery, and the character of Cephas had fallen into the background, or was mastered by the former. So the Master said, "Simon, son of John," as if He could no longer recognise in him the character indicated by the new name.

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" "These" may refer grammatically either to the boats and the other instruments of his former calling, or to the disciples who were around them. Either of these would yield a reasonable meaning. But it seems to me that, for many reasons which need not be given here, the meaning is that our Lord refers to the other disciples, and asks Peter whether he still thought that his love to Jesus was greater than the others bore to Him. For Peter had formerly protested, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." On other occasions also had Peter protested that he loved the Lord with a surpassing love, and he had assumed that his love to the Master was greater than the love which the other disciples had. The question put by our Lord, in the very form of

it, was meant to search the heart of Peter, to bring back to his remembrance his former protestations, and to ask him if he was of the same mind still as when he had spoken these words. "Lovest thou me more than these?" But Peter had learned a great deal since he had so spoken. He had learned humility, self-distrust, and his sense of security had been shaken. He had learned that in his own strength he had no security. He had failed in the hour of trial. He had slept when his Master needed his wakeful sympathy. He had denied his Lord and Master. While all the disciples forsook their Master and fled, Peter had been conspicuous in the fact that he had formally denied any knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth.

Hence the searching character of the question, and it did search Peter through and through. Another element to be noticed shows further how searching the question was. The word for "love" is a distinctively New Testament word. It really contains in itself the fulness of New Testament revelation. It is the word which describes the character of God, for God is Love. It describes the relation of the Father to the Son, for the Father loveth the Son. It describes also the attitude of God, Father, Son, and Spirit to the people of God. And it describes the ideal attitude of God to His creation. "For

164 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." This is the word which our Lord uses when He asks Peter the searching question, "Lovest thou me?" It is as if the Lord asked Peter if he had any share in this new revelation of love, if he really understood that there was a new kind of love manifested in the world and manifested to men, in the coming of the Lord. Through the night of the betrayal our Lord had spoken much of this new kind of love, of the love He bore to His people, of the responsive love they bore to Him, and now He asks Peter if he had any of this kind of love within his heart.

Peter's answer is significant. It is full of humility, of self-distrust. He will speak only that of which he is absolutely sure. He will make no comparison between the love which he feels and that which others feel. That part of the question is left unanswered. Nor will he seek to justify his former sayings, nor boast of his love. Nor will he lay claim to a possession of this new kind of love which Jesus had revealed to men. He is not really sure whether he has this new kind of love. But he is sure that he loves the Master with a love which has taken possession of his whole being. So he answers the question in his own way. He uses a word which men were in the way of using when

they spoke of friendship, loyal, devoted, and true, as it existed between man and man. That word does express loyalty, devotion, admiration, everything that can bind a man in service to his fellow. So Peter affirms that he does love Jesus in this sense. Of this he is very sure, and he says so.

But the question is put to Peter a second time. As now put, it leaves out all reference to other people, and it leaves Peter face to face with his Master, with no one to come between them. As if our Lord had said, "Leaving out all comparison between you and others, are you sure that you love me?" Our Lord uses the word which He had used before. The meaning of the question has grown in intensity by leaving out the reference to other people. It is more searching than before. "Lovest thou me, as I have loved you?" And Peter in his new answer does not go beyond his former statement. He uses his own word. But in each answer he appeals to our Lord's own knowledge of what is in Peter's heart. "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Leaving for the moment the commission to Peter which is given to him at the answer to each question, let us read the third question and the answer to it. "He saith to him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third

time, Lovest thou me? and he said to him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee." For the third question really has a more searching reference than the former two had. Each question is more intense than the former, though it asks less. For in the third question Jesus uses the word which Peter had continued to use in his answers to the first two questions. Peter had not ventured to claim that his love to Jesus was such as to justify him in using the new word for "love" which Jesus used, but he was sure that he had a real devoted attachment and loyal affection to Jesus, and now the question is so put as to seem to throw doubt even on the reality of that affection. No wonder though he was grieved when the question was put for the third time, and put in that particular form.

Both by the scenes and circumstances of the day, and by the searching character of the questions He put, our Lord enabled Peter to know himself, his weakness and his strength, and sent him forth again to work, an abler, wiser, and stronger man. An interview with Jesus does not leave a man where it found him. He comes forth from it with a loftier conception of duty, with a heart enlarged, with a conscience purified, and an intelligence enlightened. For this searching of Peter's heart is

done with a gracious purpose. It is partly for the sake of Peter himself, and partly for the service that Peter can do. For no Christian experience is merely for the sake of him who has it. All gifts are for service, and all experience, even the most intimate, is never for his sake alone who has it; it is for the sake of others as well. So each question and each answer is followed by the commission, "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep; feed my sheep." There are variations in the words used here, but we may not dwell on them. But you may ask why it is said twice "Feed my sheep," and only once "Feed my lambs." Evidently the reason is that if you feed the sheep well, she will feed the lamb. On which much might be said.

Peter having been searched through and through, and having realised his utter dependence on his Lord and Master, is reinstated in his office and work. The former commission and promise is not recalled, he is still to be a fisher of men; but the new commission lays stress on the fact that men, after they have been caught, have need to be looked after, watched, tended, and fed. This is something also to be remembered by all of us. But as often as the Master puts us into office and work, He calls us apart to be with Himself. When He searches us, and tries us, and causes us to feel that we are insufficient for these things, and when

He has emptied us of self-confidence, He sends us forth full of His Spirit, to do work for Him. Ay, and sometimes, too, from the safe shelter of fellowship with Himself, He gives us a vision of the future and of what service for Him may cost us. So He did with Peter on this memorable occasion. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest : but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Sometimes the Master gives His people a vision of the future when He sends them forth to work. As an interview with Him casts a searching light on the past and reveals to us our weakness and hesitations of the past, so during that interview with Him He may give us a vision of the future, that we may go forth to our work braced to meet whatever may befall. Surely there can be no fitter time or place to think of the dangers or risks of the future than when we are with Jesus, in loving fellowship with Him. Then His people go forth to work for Him, and their delight is to do the work, and to feel that, while they are in His service, they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

But the last, the inspiring word is that with which He concludes this impressive scene. "Follow me."

Going forth to work for Him, whether we go to the catching of men for Him, or to the tending and feeding of them with the bread He giveth us for them—in all cases it is a following of Jesus. “Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world,” was His last spoken word to His disciples, and “Follow me” is His last word to Peter. He goes before. He is present with us in all work we do for Him. “Follow me.” Let us be sure that the paths we take are paths in which Jesus has trod. And of this we may be sure, for He has not left us without guidance. It may be a toilsome, upward path, it may lead us into many situations displeasing to the natural man, but there is no joy equal to that which comes to a man when he is persuaded that he is going on a path which Jesus has trod before. If we follow, there is joy in the following, and in following there is great reward.

XI

NO CONDEMNATION--NO SEPARATION

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."—ROM. viii. 1.

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—ROM. viii. 38, 39.

THERE is a great contrast between the atmospheres of the beginning and the end of this chapter. In the beginning the apostle is thinking of condemnation, of the great peril he has escaped, and of the awfulness of that condition which he calls condemnation. The dread of condemnation, and the horror of it, had taken complete possession of his mind, and he can think of nothing else. In the end of the chapter that feeling has passed into the background, and the fear that fills his heart is lest anything should separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. In the opening of the chapter he fears the awfulness of condemnation; in the close of it he fears separation,

and nothing else than separation. Let us see what makes the difference. For clearly there is a great difference—a difference in the atmosphere, a difference in the objects of his hope and fear, and a difference in the feelings with which he regards these. What are these differences?

When a man has passed through a great and imminent danger, for a time he can think of nothing else than the danger he has escaped, and the joy of deliverance. These fill the whole horizon, and occupy all his power of thought and feeling. A sailor who has been shipwrecked, and who, through imminent peril, has made his way to the shore, for a time continues to look at the angry waves, at the surf through which he has passed, and his mind dwells on the many perils which had threatened his life. But these tumultuous emotions tend to pass into the background. He begins to look at the land on which he has been cast, on the country in which he is, and he thinks of the possibility of finding the means of living in that land strange to him. He explores the valleys, climbs the heights, and makes himself acquainted with his new surroundings. For a time he thought of the dangers he had escaped, of the perils of the past; now he has to think of his present situation and of the possibilities of the future. So it is with the apostle, who had realised

the awfulness of sin, the horror of condemnation, and had experienced the great emotion of finding that there was no condemnation. He feared condemnation with an overwhelming fear. He had welcomed deliverance with unbounded gratitude. But speedily he asks himself, What is the meaning of the state in which there is no condemnation? What are the positive contents of that state? And what is implied in it?

So letting the feelings appropriate to that state at its beginning fall into the background, he begins to think of the full meaning on its positive side of that state in which there is no condemnation. Let us follow him as he thinks it out and makes himself familiar with the new country. Not that we can follow him into all the details of this wondrous chapter, but we may follow him in the larger conceptions into which he gathers his thoughts.

The first thing that strikes him as he tries to think out the new situation is that the state in which he now is means life, and life from the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and life which proceeds in an orderly manner—a life according to law. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." What the law of sin and death was for him, he had set forth in the preceding chapter; now he has seen that deliverance from that

law has been wrought out by another law, namely, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That law is now working in him, and he endeavours to understand the working of it. Into the details of that explanation it is not necessary to enter at present, the main thing being that Paul sees that the state of no condemnation is a state in which the Spirit of life is working mightily, and working according to method, and after a law. Life, then, is the other side of the state in which there is no condemnation.

But life has an atmosphere and a sphere of its own, and the apostle proceeds to describe them. It is a sphere in which the Spirit of God lives and works, a sphere into which those are brought who have been set free from the law of sin and death. The Spirit works in them, they yield to the Spirit, and so they become conscious that they are the sons of God. They become at home in the Father's house, learn the language of the family of God, and are able to know the Father and to speak to Him as His children do. They are able to feel the fatherhood of God, and to use the children's language, "Abba, Father." Every family so far makes its own language, a language derived from the family life, from the intercourse of the members of the family one with another and with father and mother. Enter

as a stranger into any family, and though the family may speak the tongue which you speak, yet soon you will find that the words used by them have meanings which cannot be found in the dictionary, but a meaning drawn from the life of the family, from incidents which happened, and from memories which are cherished by the family and are known to them alone. As you sit with them at table some words are spoken, and a ripple of laughter passes round the circle, or some member of the family colours up and looks pleased, and the meaning of it all is hidden from you. You have not yet entered into the life of the family, and the secret of its life is hidden from you. So there is a language of the family of God made up of the experiences of the family, of the talks they have had with one another, and of their fellowship with the Father, of their communion with the Son, of the experiences wrought in them by the Spirit of life. The family of God makes its own atmosphere, creates its own language, and lives its own life. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear His name. An old Psalmist made that discovery. And the secret is that which they learn from familiar intercourse with God.

This, then, is the meaning on the positive side of the state in which there is no condemnation. It means that those who have passed into that state

have life, that they realise that they are children of God, that they are learning the language of the home, and that they are children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. It means also that they have learnt to measure the value and the worth of things by a new scale. They learn to weigh the things of earth in the balances of eternity. Formerly they had their measures, and their reckonings, and their standard of worth, but now these are clearly inadequate. For new discoveries have been made, and new values have been discovered, and there must be a new ground of reckoning. Children of God must reckon by Divine standards. Formerly pleasure seemed the thing to be desired, pain the thing to be avoided. That was the reckoning of men before they found Christ, but now "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." Suffering, sorrow, pain, on the old reckoning, were things to be avoided, now they are seen in a new light. If sufferings are the means towards the revelation of glory, if our affliction is working out for us an eternal weight of glory, then there are new grounds of comparison, and reckoning and judgment are to be made in accordance with that discovery. So Paul has made a new judgment of worth, and has written it down according to the

new standard, which reverses all previous judgments. Suffering obtains a new colouring, for it seems to be the way by which glory is to be realised. It is not therefore worthy to be compared with the glory.

This reckoning and the ground of it places men in a new relation to the striving upwards of the whole creation. Christian men are called on to sympathise with the upward struggle of the whole creation, both with those who fail and with those who succeed. The picture drawn by the apostle seems to imply that the very highest forms of life are implicit in the lowest, and there is in the lowest a striving upwards towards the highest. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and the highest looking back on the struggle are called on to sympathise with the striving creation. There is an aim, there is a purpose in creation, and that aim works in and through all creatures, and they must struggle upwards towards the higher goal. The creatures are made so as to make themselves. The apostle, in that great way of thinking characteristic of him, sets forth in outline the way in which creation is set to work for its own realisation, and places man in the same striving, and new men in Christ Jesus are seen to work towards the higher goal not yet fully disclosed. To unfold

the meaning further is not possible within our limits, but a great meaning is there, and is not yet fully grasped by any of us.

But one glimpse of that larger meaning we obtain as we read what Paul has to say about the togetherness of things. "We know," he says, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." It is a remarkable thought even at the present hour, when science and philosophy have familiarised us with the conception that all things are in a system, and all things belong together. But it was a very great thought at the time when it was written. For to few was it given to think that the whole was a system. Few believed that there was a unity in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath. There was no unity of the divine, for they believed in many gods; there was no unity of the earth. But Paul saw and expressed the great thought, that all things work, that all things work together, and that all things work together for good. That on all things have been impressed a law of work, and that there is nothing in the world which can refuse its share of work, and that all things work together in a system, and that each is in relation to every other thing, and that all work together in relation to the whole—these are the thoughts of far-reaching philosophic worth.

178 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

But the greatest is yet to come; for all things work together for good, yea for the good of them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. Thus to the apostle good is the final outcome of the striving of things towards a goal. That striving is unconscious in the lower creation; it tends to become conscious in man, who has the power of looking before and after, of forming ideals, and of pining for what is not yet; it comes to clear consciousness in them who love God and are the called according to His purpose. To them it is given to be in sympathy with God in His great purpose of making a world to which He can give Himself, and which can in measure receive Him. But this work is great, and the difficulty of achieving it is in proportion to its greatness. It means work for the Creator, it means also work for the creation. "For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," waiting and working for the great end.

Thus we see a great sight. God working through the ages, striving to make a world to which He can give Himself, and the world groaning, consciously or unconsciously, and travailing together, striving to reach the goal of life, namely, union with God and communion with Him. Thus the other side of the state of no condemnation unfolds itself to wider

and grander meanings. It means life, it means sonship to God, it means being at home with God, it means sympathy with all forms of life, it means concern for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose of love, and it means that the children of God must learn to think things together, and to think them in the unity of the Divine purpose of love.

Then the apostle turns back in order to place these great thoughts in relation to the feelings, the thoughts, and to the encouragement of men. What do these things practically mean? he seems to ask himself and his readers. What then shall we say to these things? What shall we say of life, of sonship, of the togetherness of things, of sympathy with the groaning creation, of all things working together for good? Are not these things too good to be true? Are there good grounds for trusting to them? In answer to these questionings the apostle leads his readers back to the fact of Christianity, and to the gospel of truth he had to proclaim. He has no doubt about the facts of the love of God, or of the gracious purpose of God. He believes that God is for His people. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But God is for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" "He commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were

yet sinners Christ died for us." He ever comes back to the great facts of redemption, and to the great meaning underlying these facts. These of themselves prove that God is for men. Nay, the great facts are present and living and operative facts to-day, and the work of God is going on. Christ liveth and worketh to-day, and men may know that fact. It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

At this point we come to the central fact of the other side of the state of no condemnation. It means, finally, that the Christian has become one with Christ. It means that oneness with Christ has become the great fact of the new life. He is in Christ as the branch is in the vine. He becomes more and more conscious of the fact that his whole life depends on his continued fellowship with Christ; that all his well-springs are in Christ. For Christ is living, making intercession, is keeping His people in active fellowship with Himself; and is filling them with His Spirit. He tends to make them think with all the breadth of His thinking, to feel with all the intensity and purity of His feeling, and to act with the simplicity, directness, and certainty of His action. If these things are so, then clearly the most desirable of Christian experiences, and the most needful, is just

the consciousness of Christ's presence; and the thing most to be feared is the sense of His absence. In Christ Jesus, and to know that we are in Christ Jesus, is thus the culmination of Christian blessedness. So it was in the experience of the apostle, so it is in the experience of those who follow after Paul. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

At the end of the chapter, and rising out of the train of thought and feeling set forth in it, we find ourselves in a different atmosphere from that which obtained in the beginning of it. There we were in fear of condemnation and of all that is implied in that state; here the thought and fear of condemnation has passed into the background. There has come to us another fear, and even a greater fear; for we have discovered something of far greater worth than we had dreamed of in the former time. We have discovered Christ. We have found that we belong to Him, and that our blessedness consists in surrender to Him. We have found that in Christ we can think great thoughts, have experience of deep, pure, and wide feelings, and can do great and noble deeds. To feel and to know the love of Christ, to be conscious of His

presence, means life and the joy of living. So our greatest fear is that of separation from Him. So it was with the apostle. The final words of the chapter are addressed to that state of mind, namely, that which, having had experience of the gladness which comes from fellowship with Christ, shrinks with a terrible dread from the possibility of separation from that fellowship. The form which the words take is an enumeration of those things which might possibly separate us from Christ. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

These are the things which men usually fear and seek to avoid. They form a company of things undesirable by man, and are things which they shun and avoid. But the apostle does not enter into a description of them, or set forth the nature of them. He simply enumerates them, and leaves them in all their naked terror. All he asks is whether they can separate us from the love of Christ. If they do not separate from the love of Christ, the Christian can afford to neglect them. For what he desires above all things is just the consciousness of Christ's presence and fellowship. He fears all that tends to separation; he does not fear anything else. The apostle has found that tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, sword, has not separated or even tended

to separate him from the love of Christ. These are not the words of one who writes or speaks about trouble or anguish from a mere theoretical point of view. Paul had had experience of them all. He knew what it was to sing praises in the jail, with the untended marks of stripes on his wounded body. Read what he tells of such experiences in many of his letters. And his testimony is that these tribulations had not separated him from the love of Christ. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." For somehow these had their compensations. It almost seemed that through these experiences of woe and pain new avenues were opened up by which Christ Jesus could enter in, and disclose Himself to Paul in a more gracious and wondrous manner. The exaltation of feeling caused through suffering, the widening of conscious experience through the newness of trouble, seemed to make the heart and inner nature more susceptible to the spiritual presence of the Lord. At all events, the result was that Paul was more than conqueror through that experience through which he had passed. Along with the suffering there came a more vivid consciousness of the presence of Christ, and all things which helped him to realise that presence made him feel that he was more than conqueror through Christ and the love of Christ. It

is not as if the apostle were to welcome trouble merely for its own sake, or that he was to apportion out trouble to himself for the sake of the experience which might follow. It does not lie with him to seek tribulation, or anguish, or any other trouble. That does not lie in his hands, it is in the hand of God. But when the Father does appoint that experience for any one of mankind, his business is not to fret, or to complain of it, nor even to mourn over it, but to make sure that through the trouble he shall find a nearer access to Christ, and make the trouble a means by which he shall be more than conqueror. It is not these things which come on us from without, not tribulation, or any other of these things enumerated by the apostle, that causes separation. These are not what we ought to fear, but the selfishness, the sin, the refusal to follow, the immersion in other thoughts and things which hide Christ from us: these are the things to be feared and to be avoided.

So we come to the final outburst of elevated thought and devout feeling in which this great chapter culminates. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It might be interesting

and instructive to dwell on the things enumerated in this passage, to classify them, and to see how comprehensive they are ; but it is not necessary, for the main thing is to note that not any, nor all of these together, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing in the universe, in the heaven or the earth, shall be able to come between God's people and the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Thus the chapter ends in this triumphant outburst of joyful confidence in the permanence and the power of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The conclusion of the chapter, also, forms a test for us as to our progress in the Christian life. What do we most dread? What is the object of our greatest fear? Is it any of the things enumerated by the apostle, as things which men usually regard with apprehension and dread? Or is the thing we most greatly fear just separation from Christ? Can we sympathise with the apostle in this triumphant outburst, and make it our own? Or are we still in the state of mind in which the chapter began, and are in fear of condemnation, and all that it implies? Let us try to live through, and work through, the chapter, and attain to that serene, joyful, Christian confidence, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

XII

A PERFECT LIFE

“It is finished.”—JOHN xix. 30.

“It is finished, it is complete, it answers to its ideal, what was meant by that life and work has been accomplished,” such is the meaning of the word spoken by the Lord, as from the cross He looked back on the course of His life and work. Nothing had been left undone which ought to have been done, and nothing done which ought not to have been done. No other man, since the world began, could have said that word as Jesus said it. Other men might have said, “It is over, it is done, my life has been lived, and my work has been done, as I was able to do it. But on looking back I see many things which have not been wisely done, many things which I wish I had not done. I have had thoughts which were inadequate and untrue; I have cherished feelings which were contrary to the spirit of love and peace, and I have done deeds which were unfair and unjust.”

For in all other lives there was room for sorrow, regret, and repentance ; and a man trying his own life in the light of a larger experience and at the bar of a conscience and reason enlightened must condemn himself and blame his action. On looking back, he sees many things which he wishes he could change, many things unwisely done, many ideals he cherished and sought to realise which he now gladly recognises were unworthy and wrong, and he is happy that he had failed to realise them. All men who have lived to purpose recognise that they have done what they ought not to have done, and left undone what they ought to have done. This confession is also most readily made by those whose aims have been highest and whose achievements have ranked greatest among the doings of the children of men.

But Jesus, on the cross, looking back over all His life and work, could calmly say of it, "It is finished." He had lived a perfect, complete human life, in which there were no mistakes, no omissions, no shortcomings. There was no room for regret, no occasion for repentance in His life. He had spoken no word which on reflection He could wish to have left unspoken, and He had never refused to speak the fitting word when such a word was needed. Always equal to the occasion, always prepared to feel, think, act, as the time and people required Him to do, He

fulfilled His life-work, and on looking back He could say, "It is finished, it is perfect, it is what it ought to be."

As we reverently read what records of His life have been given to us, we see that the life was, so far, a life like that which other men have to live on this earth. It is a truly human life, and passes through the stages through which other men pass. He is born as other men are born, and begins life as a child, dependent as other children are on a mother's love and care. He was a helpless infant, borne in His mother's arms during the time when He had not the strength to walk. He grew in wisdom and in stature as other boys grow. But in all these circumstances of His life, what is noted is that in all these stages He was, as a child, as a boy, as a man, what a child, a boy, and a man ought to be. In the harmony of that gracious life sin never made a discord. In the hierarchy of the complex nature of that man there were always subordination, gradation, peace. The appetites and passions of man's nature were present in Him, and they too had their respective objects, but they were ever in subordination to the reason, thought, and conscience of Jesus. In us these are often contrary one to the other. Appetite pulls us one way, and in its imperative mood hunger impels us straight to its object; and particular passions

directed to their particular ends urge a man onwards to their gratification, regardless of the highest interest of the whole nature. Reason and conscience pull one way, and appetite and passion pull another way ; and the will is often paralysed in the intensity of the struggle. We long for a time when all these will draw in one direction, and work together for a great end in which all parts of our nature will have a share. It is so hard to introduce harmony into our nature, so difficult to let the emotional part of our nature have its due place, and at the same time have regard to the claims of our rational and moral needs. The idea is to have the appetites and passions possess their place as springs of action, as the spurs which urge us on to a destined end, and to let our power of moral judgment always have that supremacy which is its due. But to attain even a partial end a man must often make a sacrifice of one part of his nature to another, and yet the ideal is that a man ought to have a whole and not a mutilated nature.

This ideal was realised in the Man Christ Jesus. He is the only Man in whom a whole human nature found a complete expression. He, indeed, is the only complete Man in whom manhood attained to its ideal. It is a harmonious life, not merely sinless, but a life in which all the faculties and capacities of human nature reached their perfection, and all in the harmony

of a united life, in which no part was sacrificed to the other, for no such sacrifice needed to be made.

But the harmony of a whole life does not consist merely in the relation of all the elements of human nature towards one another as parts of one whole. It is also set in relation to God, to man, and to the world. There must be reverence towards what is above us, to what is on a level with us, and to what is beneath us. If this life was to be complete, it must be lived in a right relation towards God. What is His relation to the Father? It is one of trust, obedience, fidelity, and love. He is ever in conscious dependence on the Father, and never acts without direction from the Father. Even in His boyhood He is ever in the Father's business. At every stage of His life He is in fellowship with the Father. His footsteps are ordered by God. As He grows in wisdom and stature, He is also growing in the consciousness of the Father's presence and guidance. For He does grow. The horizons of His mental vision become wider and wider as the years pass on. And He is ever true to the vision of life and duty which opens up to Him. It is not possible for us to trace the growing mind of Jesus, or to follow the steps of His development. But we may say that it is the growth of a life which at each stage of it is a truly normal life. Nay, it is the only normal human life which

the world has ever seen. In other lives there were failures, in the life of Jesus there were none. Other men learn by mistakes, by failures, even by their sins. Jesus learned the lessons of life day by day, without mistake, without failure, without defect. It is not as if the future unrolled before His mental vision, and that He had only to follow a foreseen plan. He had to think, to bring His judgment to bear on passing events, to see the principles involved in them, and to shape His actions accordingly. For all the principles of a truly human development were present in His life. He grew by the exercise of feeling, of judgment, of reason, and of love. But His reason, feeling, and action were always exercised in fellowship with God. In His public life this has been abundantly manifested; for at each fresh departure in His ministry, as the issues of the ministry became more apparent to Him, we see that He leaves the disciples behind, and spends the night alone with the Father. He Himself says that He always spoke the Father's words, and always did the Father's works. So in the full exercise of all His human faculties and powers, and always in the fellowship of God, Jesus grew into the full consciousness of Himself and of His place in the universe, and His mission in the world. Nor did He come to that full consciousness all at once. There are tokens of a sense of widening

horizons, of higher ideals, of growing apprehensions of the breadth of His mission even to the end. But in each situation His was a perfect human life, a life that always fulfilled its ideal. For the first time in the history of man there is a Man after God's own heart, a Man in the true meaning of Humanity. At the opening of His ministry He had the testimony of the Father, "This is my beloved Son." And through all His earthly life the consciousness of perfect fellowship and inner harmony of will with God never left Him.

But perfect harmony with God meant imperfect harmony with a sinful world. In the world of sinful men, the sinless Son of God could never feel at home. A sinless man in a sinful world, a life in harmony with God in a world of men not in harmony with God, must be a life spent in opposition to the sinful ways of men. The mere fact of living in such a world must mean to a sinless man pain, sorrow, and shame. All the more must He have felt the burden of this contrariety between the life of men and His own life; since His heart was filled with compassion for them in their erring ways. He came to seek and to save the lost. And in seeking and in saving them He had to take their place. But that did not lessen the pain and sorrow which He ever felt in the presence of sin and impurity. The

completeness of His own fellowship with God, and the gladness of it, increased His horror of the life spent in remoteness from God, in opposition to God. So He was in opposition to the ways of sinful men, and yet He was always striving to win men back to God. Infinite compassion for the erring, the sinful, the lost, along with infinite condemnation of sin, these were the feelings of the Man Christ Jesus. He gave Himself for men, that He might bring them back to God.

His relation to the world, the world which was in suffering for the sins of man, was not one of opposition. It was a world full of the Father's presence to Him. From His own words we may gather what delight He had in the world of nature. The grass of the field, the birds of the air, the ways of animals, the growing corn, the vines and their branches, were sources of endless delight to Him. He found the Father in them all. The Father provided for them all. Nay, we find that He took delight in the play of children, and could use this play to illustrate His meaning when He talked with the people. In relation to God, to man, and to the world, the Son of Man unfolded His perfect life and realised the type of perfect manhood.

In Him man had a new beginning, and realised the type of perfect manhood as God had meant man

to be. Man had summed up in himself the whole creation. Each of us recapitulates in his own life the life history of all living things, and man is the meaning of creation. Jesus sums up in His own life the whole normal history of man. He is Man as man was meant to be. He is no doubt the Gift of the Father unto the world. But He is no less the offering of the world to God. The whole creation is in Him. For He is the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. In Him the creation is complete, and in a sense Christ is the world.

From this point of view we contemplate what men are wont to call His work. It is as the representative of the whole world that the Son of Man speaks to the Father about the world. In Him the world, erring, sinful, wicked though it be, can speak to the Father. For in Him and His life the world has attained to its ideal. He sums up the meaning of the world, and in His perfect life the world is ideally in harmony with God. But that ideal has to be wrought out in the stress of actual circumstances, and that meant, not only that the world should attain to its ideal in Him, but that the burden of the world's deficiencies must be borne by Him. He is answerable for the conduct of the world, and so the world's sin is laid on Him.

We may never fully comprehend the awful mystery

of the great fact that the sin of the world was laid on the sinless Son of Man. "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." So one of His greatest disciples interpreted the mystery of the Atonement. And we may take it from him; respecting his great insight into the matter. But in His own words we also have the great fact that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, that He gave His life as a ransom for many. This much at least is clear, that it was on the basis of His own perfect, complete life that He was able to offer for the world a perfect sacrifice, acceptable to God. In Him the world rendered a perfect obedience to God; in Him men offered up to God a perfect sacrifice, and it was a real sacrifice on the part of the world and of man. For this end it was that He took on Himself the conditions of created life, identified Himself utterly with the life of creaturehood, and behaved Himself in all this life as one who limited Himself altogether to the conditions of a servant. Everywhere and always in His incarnate state He was the Servant of the Father, living wholly under the conditions of created life, and ever seeking as servants do to ascertain the Father's will, and to do it. So as a man identified with man, as a creature one with the

creation, He earned the right to speak for them and act for them in relation to God. In the Old Testament it was the kinsman who had the right to redeem his friend, and it was the right of a kinsman to work out the redemption of his fellow. So it is the right of the Kinsman-Redeemer to take the place of man, and by the grace of God to taste death for every man. There is nothing artificial in the essential Christian idea of the Atonement. It is not as if one who had no connection with man had gratuitously entered in and suffered for those with whom He had no real relation ; on the contrary, it is the work of a Kinsman who was bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, who identified Himself so with them as to be one of them. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself also took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver those who through all their life were subject to bondage."

The Lord caused to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. It is not a transference of guilt ; nor does imputation, or counter-imputation, fully describe the essence of the relation between Christ and His people. He is one with them, and they are one with Him. It is as Man, as Man who realised God's ideal of manhood, as Man who realised what normal human ex-

perience ought to be, that our Lord offered Himself to the Father, and won for man the right of access to the Father. Thus there is nothing artificial in the relation between Christ and the world; He is the world. There is nothing artificial in the relation between Christ and His people, He is His people. What He did they did, what He suffered they suffered. Human experience of sorrow, of suffering, of death, was a real experience to Him. He endured all, and more than all the experience of woe that men ever had. He, too, entered into the valley of the God-forsaken, and was where God seemed not to be. The world's sin swept between Him and the Father, and it was a real experience that caused the awful cry, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So of this part of His experience our Lord could also say, "It is finished." The Atonement was complete, because it was the offering of a perfect life, and it was on the footing of a perfect life that He offered Himself to God, in the name and for the sake of man. The Father had sent Him into the world, and on His entrance on His public work had borne testimony to Him in the words, "This is my beloved son." He was declared to be the Son of God with power in His resurrection from the dead. The resurrection was the declaration of the Father that the words on the cross, "It is finished," were true. The world and man

198 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

had offered up to God the sacrifice which was needed in order that man might have freedom of return to God, and be reconciled to Him.

Looking back on the life He had lived, on the work He had done, and on the agony of the Garden and on the Cross, our Lord could say, "It is finished." Looking again at the death He died and on the satisfaction He had rendered, He could still say, "It is finished." But, while all this is finished and complete, yet there is a work of the Mediator which is still unfinished. Luke begins his second treatise with the suggestive and significant words, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach," evidently implying that the second treatise was to deal with what Jesus continued to do and teach. So he writes the Acts of the Apostles, to show the work which Jesus has continued to do. And the story of the Christian ages is just the story of the work of the Risen Lord, reconciling man to God, building up the kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy. His work begins anew in everyone who is brought into the kingdom of God. He is our Advocate with the Father, as He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Jesus liveth and worketh to-day. He liveth and worketh in many ways and by many agencies, all of which He causes to converge to the one great end of

making men fit, as individuals and as a kingdom, to receive God. For this end He reigneth in heaven, and maketh intercession ; for this end He has sent forth His Spirit, to work on men, to dwell in them, to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints. This work goeth on still, and it is in the hands of the living Christ. From Him comes forth that stream of Divine beneficence that has been working through the ages, making men to be men in Christ. It has been a slow process, for He has to make men by making them make themselves. He has to introduce harmony into human nature, and to make all the elements of humanity work together in the harmony of a united life. He has also to make men work together in harmony, peace, and love, as is fit in the kingdom of God. It is slow work and hard work, and there are many hindrances. But the end is sure. For Jesus liveth and worketh, and has all power in heaven and in earth, and all power is in the service of His love. But the essential thing for us is just to have this persuasion, this assured conviction, that Jesus is living, is working, is acting on the minds and hearts of men to-day. If we have this belief, we can work hopefully, joyously, in the face of discouragements and fears. Take it from us, and we sink into hopelessness and despair. For, after all, the belief of Christ's presence to His people, in His people, and

with His people, is the central conviction of all who trust Him. Take that belief from them, take away the persuasion that Christ can and does help, save, and bless men to-day, and you take away the very spring of Christian action.

But Christ is living. He is speaking to men to-day, and millions of Christian people bear the living Christ with them into the work of the world, and are testifying that Christ has found them, and they have found Him, and that He is really a living, working Saviour to-day. So the work goes on, and every generation finds that Christ is present with them. He is the contemporary of every age, and He speaks the language of every generation. He is present with them, and meets their needs whatever these needs may be. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and wherever there are those possessed with the thirst for truth, wherever there are those yearning for life, wherever there are those who long for guidance, Jesus is in their very longings, and whether they know it or know it not, Jesus is in all their lives, and is present in every ideal they form for themselves. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in Him all needs are met and all ideals realised.

So the Risen Lord works on, and gathers to Himself other workers, in order that the kingdom of God

may come. He is working earnestly, eagerly, shall we say passionately, for the winning of men to God. Yes, we may say so ; for it is true. The love of Christ for men passeth our comprehension. The passionate longing for the goodness and worthiness of men in the heart of the living Saviour passeth all understanding. The Scriptures say so, the Christian heart feels so, and our business is to think about this great fact, to dwell on it, to brood over it, till our hearts burn within us, and we are pervaded with this love, and are urged on by it to a passionate desire to love men as Jesus loves them, and to serve them as He serves them.

But of this work, the work of making a new world of righteousness, peace, and joy, it will be said by and by, "It is finished." A world will be made to which the Father can give Himself, and which can receive Him. For God is Self-communication, and it is His delight to give Himself to His creation. It has been His work to make a world to which He could give Himself. That world is making, and will some day be made. On that day the Son shall be able to say, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given to me," and the Son will present them to the Father a perfect people, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. It is coming ; for Jesus liveth and worketh, and His work He will not leave unfinished.

“Then cometh the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” Thus there gleams before us the time when this section of the work of Christ will also be complete, when He will present to the Father those whom He has saved, redeemed, made perfect and complete. Then once again He will be able to say, “It is finished.” What He had once said of His own personal life and work, He will now be able to say of His life and work in other people, whom He has gathered in, and shaped into His body, which is the fulness of Him; and which He now presents to the Father as the fulness of His completed work.

XIII

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK

“Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.”—MARK vii. 34.

FROM the borders of Tyre and Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee, right across the country, our Lord went, and wheresoever He went He found people who had need of Him, and whosoever asked His help found it. On the borders of Tyre and Sidon, the Syrophenician woman, by her great faith, won from Him the healing of her daughter. At the other end of the journey He met a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. Human helplessness and need pressed on Him wheresoever He went, and appealed to His compassion. Not merely to His compassion, but to His helpfulness. For He acted so, as if the sight of suffering and sin were always painful to Him, as if they made a demand on His strength and pity, as if there were always in Him an impulse to remove them, and to relieve the suffering, and pardon the sinful, if it were possible. No one, being in need,

ever made an appeal to Him, and went unanswered away. So, when they bring to Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, our Lord listened to them as they besought Him to lay His hand on him. He had compassion on him in his affliction. For, though not a painful trouble, it was one that placed the man at a great disadvantage. One of the ways by which our fellow-men communicate with us was barred to this man. He was deaf, and could not hear what his fellows said. That gateway of knowledge was shut, and all that by it helped a man to a larger life was of no avail. Nor could he communicate to his fellows anything of what he felt, thought, and desired. The hindrances to a full life were great, and our Lord at the appeal of the people who brought the man, resolved to help him. He is ready to save life, to remove and rebuke disease, but He is ready also to remove the hindrances and the disabilities to a rich, full, and gracious life. When the appeal is made, He responds. "And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and spat, and touched his tongue, and healed him." It is to the further action, in healing the man, that I ask attention. "Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, Be opened."

Having regard to the text, and to our Lord's actions, we discern three things.

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL WORK 205

The first is, fellowship with God. "Looking up to heaven."

Second, sympathy with man. "He sighed."

Third, these are the conditions of successful work. He spake the word of power. "Be opened."

1. Fellowship with God. "He looked up to heaven." It is a way our Lord had. When He felt that any work required to be done, or when He had to make a fresh departure in His work, He always looked up to heaven. He felt He was doing the Father's work, and as He did the work He looked to the Father for help and guidance. When He had compassion on the multitude, and wanted food for them, He looked up to God, and the Father's strength came to Him, and the food multiplied till the wants of the people were satisfied. When He wanted a man back from the grave, a man who had been in it for four days, He prayed to the Father, and then spoke the word of power, "Lazarus, come forth." It was so in all His work, He did nothing without the Father. Nor was it always as it was here. Not always a swift upward look and a swift answer, and then the work done. Sometimes the Son, in the loneliness of His life, felt the need of prolonged fellowship with the Father, and He retired from all other fellowship to spend the night alone with God. Sometimes, may we not say, when a great crisis was near, or when a great

decision had to be made, or a new departure required to be taken, our Lord felt the need of the Father's presence, wisdom, and guidance, and at these times He made for Himself a solitude, in order to be alone with God. For He always lived in dependence upon God, and always, like other men, He sought the Father's guidance. The only difference was that in the case of other men they flee to God under the pressure of sore need, and seek His face now and then. The presence of God was the very atmosphere in which Jesus lived, and without the fellowship of the Father the Son could not live. But this constant intercourse with the Father took on a deeper form and became more intimate when the Son was face to face with a new departure, or with a crisis which needed the grace of the Father in order to meet it fully and adequately. Thus in the case before us our Lord looked up to heaven, and swift as thought came the answer from the Father, and the power to speak the word of authority and help.

Heaven was always open to Jesus. It was His home, and its presence was always felt. To other men the atmosphere of heaven seems strange; it is something to which they must become accustomed, even as they have to learn the language of the family of God. For there is estrangement, there is the feeling of sinfulness, there is the consciousness

of separation, and man has to be brought near to God, and to feel at home with God. But men have learned the language of heaven; they have come to know God and to recognise that God is their home, and that God is near to them. "If a flower fell now and then from heaven," says Mrs. Browning, "we soon would catch the trick of looking up." There is intercourse between earth and heaven, or there may be. Moment by moment the thoughts and prayers of man may ascend to God, and swiftly the answers of God may return to man. We catch the trick of looking up. We learn, as our Scottish poet said in one of his lucid intervals, that "a correspondence fixed with heaven is sure a noble anchor." Yes, it is more than an anchor, it is the source of strength, the source of movement, the power of doing work, the way by which we may attain the ideal of our life. Fellowship with God means eternal life, means fruitful work for others, means the growth to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It is through this fellowship with the Father that the Son increased in wisdom and in stature, and came to the fulness of a perfect human life. It was through the same fellowship that He came to the full consciousness of His mediatorial position and work, to the ripeness of His powers, and to the ability to see His work and to accomplish it.

In the present case He felt the desire to remove from this man those disabilities which hindered him from the living of a full and gracious life. Is this also the will of the Father? For only the works of the Father can the Son do. So the Son looked up to heaven, and swiftly came the Father's permission and the Father's power, and the word of healing was spoken. In passing, let it be said that He left to men an example that we should follow in His steps. The example of habitual fellowship is one to follow. The example of looking up to heaven when any work has to be done, or when we are thinking of any new undertaking, is also one to follow. Times of prolonged consultation with God we note in the life of our Lord ; times also of swift communion when in a moment, in a look, the heart goes forth to God, and in a moment the Father's heart responds. Time is not of the essence of communion. It may be hours, it may be in a flash ; the essential thing is that there be communion. I have known men occupied in the conducting of large affairs, who had to make swift decisions which were to have effect across the world, pausing a moment for the purpose of swift communion with God, and return to work with the energy which came to them from that moment of fellowship with the Source of all wisdom, skill, and strength. They brought the light of heaven to shine on the affairs of

earth, and the strength of God to deal with the business of this world.

That is the secret of serenity, confidence, and success. God is near, and He is interested in the life of men, in their behaviour, in their business and how they do it; and in no moment of their life and work is God a distant and uninterested spectator. It is well to learn, as we learn from the life of our Lord, that the resources of the Eternal God are at our service, that the wisdom, power, and love of God may be had for the asking. It is well to learn also that one of the conditions of successful work is precisely this fellowship with God. I say this without reserve. It is applicable to all kinds of work, whatever that work may be. It is true that without God one cannot really think a thought, one cannot draw a breath, one cannot foresee, or plan, or carry out an end by the right use of means. This is true whether the work is the driving of a nail or the preaching of a sermon; whether it be the building of a ship or the rescue of the perishing. The only difference is that while all live and move and have their being in God, and while all they do is done in virtue of the Divine strength, those who have learned from Christ the secret of the Divine life know whence their help comes, and the others know it not. All people are kept by the power of God, only those who have

become conscious of the Divine Presence, and consciously seek His face, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Let us turn now to the other condition of successful work—

2. Sympathy with man. "He sighed." It is the outcome of the deepest sympathy with the wretched, miserable condition of man. This pity finds expression in that natural sign of an oppressed spirit; the sigh. Men sigh when they are burdened, they sigh when relief comes; in short, this is the way in which men greet the approach of hope, or welcome the possibility of relief from oppressed feeling. It is also the expression of compassion, and of the hope that in some way they may be able to remove the causes of misery. So our Lord sighed, and in this gave expression to the feeling of compassion, and sympathy with the sadness, the sorrow, the misery of man. He had compassion on the multitude, we read elsewhere. But this feeling of compassion does not rest in mere feeling. With our Lord it is always the prelude to action for the removal of the causes of sorrow. Observe, however, that the two conditions of successful work always go together. Fellowship with God and sympathy with man are the two conditions of successful work. Not the one alone, or the other alone, but the two together, form the

conditions under which good work is to be done. We are so apt to separate what is really together, and sometimes to put together what ought to be separate. Men have taken fellowship with God as if that were the chief end of man, and have forgotten that fellowship with God inevitably issues in the service of man. History is full of such sad aberrations of judgment. In order to serve God, as they thought that service ought to be rendered, men have forsaken the world, buried themselves in dens and caves of the earth, retired into monasteries, and separated themselves from the service of humanity whom Christ died to save, and thus separated what God Himself had indissolubly tied together. On the other hand, men have tried to separate the service of man from the fellowship of God. In order to serve man you must first have some understanding of the greatness and the worth of man. It is not possible to measure the greatness of man, or to estimate his worth, so long as you limit your view of him and his possibilities to this world of time and space. But this is precisely what those have done who separate the service of man from the fellowship of God. They look at man as living only here and now, as having no personal interests which lead beyond this life, or if there are such interests, these are not personal, they are only interests which concern others. It is impossible

really to serve our fellow-men if we leave out of sight the thought that men live on, and on, and that they are weighted with an eternal destiny, and are of immeasurable worth. Our compassion for our fellow-men, our desire to help them, will be strengthened if we look at them as people travelling onwards to another sphere, in which all their possibilities may be realised and their full worth brought to light. From this point of view we shall regard with regret and sorrow all that hinder them, burden them, incapacitate them from the attainment of eternal life. Time and its service will be weighed in the balances of eternity, and we shall strive to fit ourselves and others for eternal life, its enjoyment and its service. But as you cannot separate the service of man from the fellowship of God, so neither can you ever separate the service of man and the service of God. Indeed, the only way of serving man is to learn to look at him from the Divine point of view, to regard him as made in the image of God, as intended for the fellowship of God, and as one destined to rise to the highest grade of finite worth.

We have to learn that God regards man with infinite compassion and with eternal love, that God is working, toiling, labouring for man, striving to make man fit to receive God. Then, like the Master, we shall sigh with unutterable sorrow over every-

thing that hinders man from realising¹ that he is from God, for God, and with God. We must strive to look at ourselves from God's point of view, and^a to look at one another as men who are the objects of Divine thought and of Divine care. In truth, the easiest^a and the shortest way of reaching our fellow-men, and^c of doing them service, is to ascend to God and to descend thence to man. To be in the fellowship of God, to know the loving purpose of God, to know that earth's sorrows are most felt up in heaven, and to feel the tide of gracious passion in the Eternal Heart for the well-being of man, and to bring with us to our work and service of man this tide of feeling, so shall we serve man as we could never serve him if we looked at him as a being whose possibilities were exhausted within the world of space and time. To feel for man as God feels, to have compassion as Christ had compassion, to see man as God sees him, as an eternal being who has to be made fit for the kingdom of God, so shall we work for man, just because we have some fit conception of man's greatness, and of the awfulness of the loss which arises if a man should fail and come short of the glory of God.

These, then, are the conditions of successful work, and when these are present the man who has them can speak with power, yea, with such power as to

awaken the man dead in trespasses and sins, and quicken him to newness of life. Not the one without the other, not the fellowship of God without sympathy with man, nor sympathy with man without the fellowship of God. But when the two come together in any human heart, then comes the rising tide of spiritual life, and the realising of the possibilities of man. As in the case of Isaiah the vision of God was speedily followed by the desire of service, and the prophet, discerning his calling, said, "Here am I, send me." As in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles, no sooner had God revealed His Son in him, than he realised his life-work, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. The clearer his vision of God became, the deeper his fellowship with God, the more passionate became his desire to help, save, and bless men. "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." So it is with all the men whose names are writ in the glory of service in the ages of the past. Fellowship with God begat in them a passionate desire for the good of man. They were able to speak the word of power, and men were saved.

Time would fail me even to name those who throughout the ages lived in the fellowship of God and spent themselves in the service of men. I should need to tell of the prophets of the olden time, of the apostles of the New Testament, of the great

leaders of the newer Christendom, from the early fathers, apostles, and ministers of the Word, down to the present day; men who went in to pray and out to work, and in to pray and out to work, and in to pray and out to work, and brought the enthusiasm and passion of heaven to the helping of men, and so wielded the power of the Eternal for the salvation of men. Think of the teachers of the nations, think of Luther, of Calvin; or, as we are Scottish men, perhaps the names of our own men will have more force as illustration of the truth in hand; think of Knox, of the Erskines, of Chalmers, and of many others. Think of Thomas Chalmers, in that sick chamber at Kilmany Manse, learning to know God, coming into close contact with the Eternal, learning to share the pity and the compassion of God, learning to look at men with the eyes of the Eternal, and thence coming forth to the service of man, thinking for them, planning for them, preaching to them, as he alone could preach, and so moving them to receive the fellowship of God, and to go forth to the service of man in his own land and far away among the nations. He first learned to know the Father, and when he knew the Father he could not help himself, he must launch forth to the service of man. So it always is. It is those who have entered into the fellowship of God who have been the greatest servants

of man. It is they who have founded our hospitals, built our infirmaries, who have brought the highest skill of the scientific healer of mankind to the help of the poor and the needy, just because they have learned that God is Love. It is they who have gone down into the wynds and streets of our great cities, to seek for, to help, and save the wretched and the miserable, forgotten by the world. They could do no otherwise, for in their lives was the fellowship of God, and the fellowship of God demands that they must serve man. In this they have learned Christ, who went about doing good, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

So qualified, the man who has fellowship with God and sympathy with man can speak the word of power, and say to the darkened eye, "Be opened," and to the stammering tongue "speak." This is no mere expectation, no mere enthusiastic expression of hope. It is a fact which is as well attested as any fact within human experience. It is a fact guaranteed to us many times and often in the history of Christ's Church. We might give great and varied proof of the statement, but to adduce all the proof would simply be to tell over again the story of Christ's Church; specially in those times when the Church lived near to Him, and was filled with His Spirit.

Nor need we refer only to the history of the past. Christ is a present and a living power to-day, and there are people alive and at work to-day who, penetrated with the fellowship of God, and filled with sympathy with man, are speaking with power; and men are born again, and enter into the kingdom of God.

“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also: and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto the Father.” “Greater works shall he do,” so our Lord promised, and He has kept His word. To take only one illustration of the truth of this saying, out of many which might be chosen. “Greater works than these,” for they are done in a sphere in which there is no reversal. The works to which our Lord mainly referred were done in the temporal sphere of things, and they were undone in the course of time. The eye which He opened that day, referred to in our text, would by and by be closed again in the darkness of death; the withered arm He restored to vigour and strength would moulder in the grave, and lose its power of movement; the daughter of Jairus would again listen to the call of death; the widow’s son, restored to life when the Master met him on the way, would again know the power of death; and Lazarus, who knew what it was to die, and was for days in the grave, would again know

that wondrous experience. And so of all the other works which Christ did in the helping and healing of men, so far as their temporal effects were concerned. But work done in the spiritual sphere knows no reversal, for over it time has no power. Spiritual work abides, it is work done for eternity. It never can grow old, never can be changed; it is among the things which cannot be moved. When Christ on that night of His betrayal spoke to His disciples, recalled to them the work He had done and the life He had lived, and said, "Greater works than these shall ye do," He really said one of the most surprising things ever spoken in this world. On the eve of death, when all things concerning Him and His work seemed to have an end, He calmly said to His disciples, "Greater works than these shall ye do." But on that, wonderful though it be, we do not dwell. What we do dwell on is the fulfilment of His word. Age by age the greater works have been done. Men have been converted from the error of their ways, bad men have been made good, sinners have become saints, and the children of men have become sons of God. And whenever this great work has been done, it has been done through those who had been lifted up into the fellowship of God, so uplifted that they came to share the Father's heart of pity, care, and sympathy for

men, and they themselves came to feel that sympathy so keenly that it must find expression and relief in action. So they lived and spoke, and acted in the world, and in them the word of power took shape and form anew, till they said, as the Master said, "Be opened"; and the blind saw, and the deaf heard, and lips were unloosed to speak the wondrous things of God.

XIV

EYES HOLDEN AND EYES OPENED

"Their eyes were holden that they should not know him."—
LUKE xxiv. 16.

"Their eyes were opened, and they knew him."—LUKE xxiv. 31.

"THEIR eyes were holden that they should not know him." Why? To answer this question we must study the whole passage. The two who went to Emmaus were disciples of the Lord. They had known Him in the course of His earthly ministry. They had followed Him, had heard His words, had witnessed His gracious deeds, and had been impressed with the weight of His great personality. They had shared the hopes of the time when He seemed to be accepted of the people. They had felt the depression of His unpopularity. They trusted that He was the Redeemer of Israel. But on them fell the darkness and the doubt of the time of His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, and death. They could trust no longer. He was dead, and their hopes lay buried in His grave. In their time of darkness,

doubt, and despair they had waited, and now it was the third day since hopelessness fell on them. They go forth on a Sabbath-day's journey to Emmaus. Perhaps they went forth to have an uninterrupted talk on all the things which had happened and on the fact of their own despair. They communed together and reasoned on all the things which had happened, and "Jesus drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Why?

As we study the situation we see why their eyes were holden. In the first place, their minds were occupied with themselves, with the bitterness of their disappointment, and with the feeling which comes from thwarted hope. They could think of nothing else than the greatness of their former hope and the bitterness of their present state. Their minds were preoccupied. So they talked together of all these things which had happened. So preoccupied were they that they scarcely noticed Jesus when He drew near and walked with them. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk?" "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" "What things?" "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in word and deed

before God and the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."

This is their story, and it really explains why their eyes were holden. As was said before, their minds were preoccupied, so that nothing could enter into them inconsistent with the ruling tone of their minds. They were resolved to be sad and hopeless. They resisted every tendency to the contrary. The irony of the situation is very striking, and quite dramatic. Their final word is, "him they saw not." They have told their story, and the story had revealed how persistent was their attitude of resistance to the evidence available for the relief of their doubt.

In the first place, they might have been prepared

for the events which had happened had they read their Bible rightly. For they had a Bible. They had the Old Testament, which was the great inheritance of their nation. It was read in the synagogue, parts of it were woven on their garments, much of it was read in the family circle. But, as the Apostle Paul says elsewhere, when they read the Old Testament a veil was over their minds. As we read it to-day, the Old Testament seems to have as its central meaning, embodied in song, in sacrifice, in story, and in prophecy, the great theme of the Redeemer who suffered for men, and all lines of the Old Testament seem to converge towards the suffering Servant of Jehovah. In a word, the Old Testament moves onwards towards Christ. It is a striking fact that this conception of the Messiah was at that time in the mind of Jesus alone. No Jew had thought of the Messiah in those terms. This is a fact well known to all who have studied the question. The Messianic ideas of the time were altogether on a different plane, and directed towards another kind of figure. The kingdom of the Messiah was thought of in the terms of Israel's kingdom in the days of David and of Solomon. Israel's kingdom was to be universal, and her dominion was to be from sea to sea, and the nations were to be in subjection to Israel. The dominion, too, was irre-

spective of the moral or spiritual character of Israel. Israel, and Israel's kingdom, depended only on the relation of Israel to Abraham. As we read the Messianic hopes of Israel, and follow the kind of expectations which they cherished, we find that they were all couched in material images, and limited to temporal forms. In fact, the Messianic conception of the Jews and the conception of the Messiah embodied in the Gospels have nothing in common but the name.

The two disciples were like their neighbours, lived in the same world, breathed the same atmosphere, and shared the same hopes. They were anxious about the kingdom and its restoration to Israel. But the kingdom was of the same kind which their countrymen expected, and its restoration was thought of as the rest of their people thought of it. A temporal kingdom, and one of outward power and glory, was what they expected. Thus it was in the main, though they had companied with Jesus during the years of His earthly ministry. They had heard the parables of the kingdom, it had been told them that the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation, they had even heard that the kingdom of heaven was within them, and yet these facts had had little effect on their minds. They heard as though they had not heard, and still went on dreaming about the

kingdom and its restoration to Israel. Hence the great catastrophe of the death of Jesus came on them with overwhelming power. For the thoughts of suffering and death had never in their minds been associated with the thought of the Messiah. Yet when they were able to read the Old Testament from the new point of view, they were able to see that they might have expected just what had happened.

In the second place, they had resisted the teaching of the Lord Himself. The Gospels record the fact that from the day of Cesarea-Philippi onwards the Lord spoke to them of what was to befall Him in Jerusalem. When He first spoke of it, it was so unwelcome that Peter began to rebuke Him when our Lord told the disciples of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. As we read the story of the later days of our Lord's earthly ministry, we are struck with His persistent efforts to prepare their minds for the events of the week at Jerusalem, and their persistent resistance to the acceptance of them. Again and again He told them in unmistakable terms of the great catastrophe, and, often as they heard these warnings, yet they did not receive or understand them. Nay, on the night on which He was betrayed, and at the supper table, they were thinking of the kingdom, and were anxious as

to the particular place and office they were to occupy in that kingdom. "There was a controversy among them as to which of them would be the greatest." No wonder that the catastrophe found them unprepared, and that their trust failed and their hopes were crushed. They had resisted the meaning of the Old Testament, they had refused to listen to the warnings of their Lord, and now, when these words of His had come true, they were amazed, horrified, paralysed, and broken down.

Nor was this all that they had resisted and refused. In the third place, the two disciples had refused to regard the evidence which was beginning to accumulate that their hopes might yet be realised. They proceed to tell of certain things which had happened after the three days had come and gone. They tell of the women who had amazed them, having been early at the tomb. These women had gone to the tomb to complete the work interrupted by the coming of the Sabbath day, and they found an empty sepulchre. They came back to tell that they found not His body, that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. Surely it might have been well had they inquired into the truth of the women's story. But their minds were preoccupied, and their eyes were holden, so that the possible truth of the story could not enter into their minds. The news could not be

true. Having laid down their canons of criticism, they consistently carried them through, and they could not, and would not, even inquire into the matter. Besides, emphasis might have been laid, consciously or unconsciously, on the fact that the story that He was alive was a story told by women. Perhaps they discounted it altogether because it was a story told by women. For were not women naturally disposed to dreams, to believing what they hoped? Were they not emotional, enthusiastic, disposed to leap at conclusions, predisposed to let their conclusions outrun the evidence, and to let the wish be father to the thought? Perhaps it was so with these two disciples, at all events they gave no credit to the story of the women. They abode in their misery and in their unbelief.

Nor, in the fourth place, did they give any credit to the confirmation of the story of the women brought to them by certain of them who had gone to the tomb, and had found it even so as the women had said. No accumulation of evidence, no amount of proof, could have made any impression on them in their then state of mind. One might almost say that they were resolved to be miserable. They would not even inquire into the possibility of the truth of the story. It could not be true. So they resisted the evidence of the women, and the confirmation of that evidence

228 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

by those who had gone to verify it. The final word of their story to the Master was this: "him they saw not." It is a dramatic situation. The state of their mind was revealed by the story which they told to Him. They lay such stress on evidence, they are sure that the story of the women could not be true, they lay stress on the fact that no one had seen the Lord, and they tell it to the Lord Himself. The irony of the situation is great. They who laid such stress on the evidence of the senses had now that evidence, and it did not help them. They say no one saw Him, and now they see Him themselves, and their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.

It seems that here we find the explanation of the journey to Emmaus, and why they went on that journey. They saw that the women had passed out of the sphere of doubt and unbelief, and passed into the region of faith and hope. They saw, also, that those who had gone to verify the story of the women had also entered, or were beginning to enter, into the calmer sphere of faith and hope, while they themselves were still in the darkness of doubt and misery. They felt far from home in that more hopeful atmosphere. They resolved to go forth from the others, in order that they might have a good talk on all the things which had happened, and on the reasons

they had for the feelings of doubt, fear, and hopelessness which they cherished. They would not be comforted. Let the women build themselves up on the vision they thought they had, let the others follow their example, the two resolved that they would not be comforted on such shallow grounds as these. They looked at themselves from a picturesque point of view. Men like to do that. They rather prided themselves on their attitude. The others might allow the dawn of hope to enter into their minds, but the two were resolved to continue to suffer the pain of their sorrow. Sorrow may make us selfish, may drive us into solitude, may unfit us for the society of those who feel that life is really worth living. So it was with these men. They went forth because the dawning joy of others was painful to them. Yet even their sorrow had for them some compensation. For were they not consistent? Were they not men who would not allow themselves to be deceived with false hopes? They would continue to suffer the sorrow which came from thwarted hopes, and they rather prided themselves on their consistency.

“Him they saw not.” And it is to Him they say it. It is to Him they speak, with Him they walk, with Him they are keeping step, and it is to Him they tell their mournful story, not without a feeling of complacency at their own consistent attitude of mind.

"Their eyes were holden, and they did not know Him."

Let us trace the process by which their eyes were opened and they came to know Him. The Lord allows them to tell their story. There is a relief in being allowed to set forth in order the causes of our misery. The telling of it lifts us out of it while we are speaking of it. We become less self-involved while we tell it. We so far forget ourselves and our misery, and cease to admire our own sorrow and our greatness in being able to bear it. So they tell their story. And immediately they are overwhelmed, surprised, shocked out of their selfish misery by the words which their unknown companion speaks to them. They had prided themselves on their hard-headedness and their demand for evidence, they were told that they were foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets had spoken. It was a surprising and startling thing to them. To be told that they were foolish men when they were regarding themselves as supremely wise was startling; to be told that the causes of their misery lay not in the facts themselves but in their slowness of heart to believe was something of a shock to them. Let us note, however, our Lord's way of dealing with them. It is His way still. He sent them back to read their Bible, the Bible they might have known, yet though

it had been within their reach so long, they had known so little of. They had read it in a certain way, let them read it again, and understand the meaning which had escaped them heretofore. If they had read it in order to find God in it, and to find the mind of God in it, they would have found that the Messiah behoved to suffer these things and to enter into His glory. "Beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." The things which had happened were the things which ought to have happened. It was according to the Scriptures that the Christ had suffered these things, and He gave them the key to that deeper interpretation of the Scriptures which the Jews had never had. In the very heart of Scripture, the deepest, most essential meaning of the Old Testament was, that God was in Christ, reconciling men unto Himself; that God had ever been seeking men, striving to win them to Himself.

It had been a relief to them to tell the story of their misery; it lifted them out of that self-absorption which had made them so miserable. To make them further forget themselves and their misery, the Lord launched them on the widening, deepening stream of Divine revelation, as that stream had flowed down through the ages. The record of God's love and

232 THE OTHER SIDE OF GREATNESS

striving was written in the Old Testament, and the two disciples learned the inner meaning of it as they never saw it before. They learned that the Messiah was in the Old Testament, but was in it precisely in those features of it which they had never thought of as belonging to the Messiah. They looked with new eyes on the things concerning Himself which Jesus unrolled before them. That meaning had always been there, though they had never seen it. For they learnt that the story of the Messiah in the Old Testament was to be found wherever the Scriptures laid stress on the seeking love of God, and on the sacrifices which that love made for man in the process of man's redemption. The sacrifices of the Old Testament took on a new meaning as they were seen to point forward to the perfect sacrifice. The pain and misery of man obtained a deeper meaning, for they were seen in the light of the supreme agony of Gethsemane and the Cross. The tenderness and love of God were realised more clearly as they saw it in the great Gift of the Eternal Son for the welfare of man. The Old Testament was seen in a new light, and was luminous with the presence of the Son of God. Thus He taught them to find Him in the Old Testament, and so prepared them to recognise Him in the scenes of their daily life.

It is His way still. He teaches us to recognise

Him in the Scriptures. He enables us to see Him both in the Old Testament and the New, to know His ways, to recognise His methods of work, to appreciate His manner of manifesting Himself, and then we find Him in all our life. We learn to know Him in His Word, and then we are able to know Him in the joys and sorrows, in the work and leisure of our common life. But perhaps the greatest effect of His opening of the Scriptures to these two disciples lay in the fact that He had made them interested in something else than themselves. As He spoke to them they became interested in the ways of God in His redemption of man; they saw more clearly, they realised more fully, the immeasurable love of God for man; their hearts burned within them as hope began once more to gleam on their horizon, and they were interested in the great fact of the Divine revelation. They utterly forgot themselves in the vision opened up to them.

The journey came to an end; they had reached the place to which they had intended to come. The journey had been short since Jesus had travelled with them. He made as though He would have gone farther. They pressed Him to abide with them, and He consented to abide with them. And it came to pass, when He had sat down with them to meat, suddenly the guest became the host, and He took

the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. Through all the journey the veil of separation had been becoming more and more transparent. But it takes much to open eyes holden by preoccupation of mind, through selfish indulgence in unavailing sorrow, and through sullen resistance to possible comfort. It took a time to prepare their minds for the rending of the veil and the opening of their eyes. It was necessary to teach them the meaning of Scripture; it was needful to recall to their minds the memory of the Master's warnings while He was yet with them; it was necessary to kindle their minds with the fire of exalted thoughts, and to warm their hearts into sympathy with the great purpose of God's loving work for the redemption; and, finally, the Lord was pleased to recall to their memory the scene of the Last Supper. What He did then, He does again in their presence; He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. The veil is rent asunder, scales fall from their eyes, and they recognise the wonted gesture. They knew Him. The recognition of Him explained much to them. It explained the strange experience, the slow lifting of the burden of sorrow, the kindling enthusiasm with which they had listened to His talk, and they say one to another, "Was not our heart burning within us

as he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Their experience while He was with them was now explained. They had recognised the Master, and they were glad.

Their sorrow and their lack of sympathy with the dawning gladness of the other disciples had driven them to take that journey to Emmaus. They were driven into solitude. But now gladness had come, and they felt that they must share their gladness with the other disciples. They would not allow any of them to remain in the state in which they themselves were but a few hours before. The man who has been blessed of Christ longs to communicate that blessing to other people. So they rose up without delay that same hour, and returned to Jerusalem. I should like to have seen them first on the journey to Emmaus and then on their return journey to Jerusalem. As they went forth they went with drooping heads and slow, lingering steps. They were sad, and showed all the signs of sadness. On their return they went with springing steps, alert and glad, with a joy in their hearts which made itself manifest in every look and gesture. The homeward journey would be done in a much shorter time than the outward one took. They were eager to communicate the joyful tidings. They had seen the Lord and were glad, and they must make the others share

their joy. So they returned to the company, and returned in a very different spirit. They found the eleven and them that were with them gathered together. It is noteworthy that they went to the place where the eleven were gathered together. In truth, there are many noteworthy things in this part of the story. The two were eager to tell their story and to share their gladness with the others, but the eleven were quite as eager to tell their story, and they also had a story to tell. The eleven, remembering the condition of mind in which the two were when they had left them, cried out as they saw them "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon." The Lord had cared for the eleven as He had cared for the two. Then the two had the opportunity to tell their story, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. The two and the eleven thus shared their experiences together, to the profit of both and to their further gladness. For an experience of Christ is not for him alone who has received it. It is meant for all His disciples. What the eleven had seen and what the two had seen are for all the people of God. Thus it ought to be to-day, and those who meet the Lord are to tell to others what their experience has been, so that the experience of each may be the common good of all.

XV

THE POWER OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

“For the love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 COR. V. 14.

“I SEE and approve the better things, I follow the worse,” is an old saying, and it gives a picturesque expression to a wide human experience. As we read the literature of the nations, we see that they have never been without an apprehension of the true, the beautiful, and the good, and in almost all ages and among all peoples there has been an apprehension of what truth and goodness means, and a failure to follow them out in conduct. Clearness of moral and intellectual vision have often been accompanied with powerlessness in moral action. The characteristic of humanity seems to lie not in defect of moral vision, or in apprehension of what is right in moral conduct, but in some sort of paralysis which enfeebles their action, and hinders them in translating into action what they see to be right and good. They see and approve the better things, they follow the worse.

The literature of the nations is rich in the expression of moral truth, and in the vision of what conduct ought to be. The history of the peoples shows at every point that they have not realised their ideals. It is not necessary to illustrate this fact at any length. Take the writings of Confucius or the legends of the Buddha, take the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or the writings of the Stoics, and out of any of these a rich and full ideal of what human life ought to be may easily be drawn. In fact, man has never been left without a vision of what he ought to be, but the difficulty lay in the lack of moral power to carry out the ideal of what conduct ought to be. Over all their efforts there came an inability to act; a paralysis was on their moral action. The good which they would they did not, and the evil which they would not, that they did. It is a sad story which the history of man thus reveals, and the problem of the ages was how to bridge the chasm which lay between thought and action, and to restore the power which would enable man to be what he saw he ought to be. How to restore the health of man, to touch morality with emotion, how to enable him to see clearly, and then to translate his thoughts and ideals into action—this was the problem set to men by their own experience, and they found no answer. Some sought an answer by laying stress on intellectual insight, on the

repression of the emotions, and resolved that the great good of man was tranquillity. They resolved to crush out the emotions and subdue the feelings until they should become altogether powerless to disturb the measureless calm which had become the ideal of their life. But the emotions and the passions refused to be curbed; they took the bit between their teeth, and hurried the man whither he would not. On the other hand, some said that pleasure or a pleasurable state of feeling was the great end of life, and they sought to cultivate this state of feeling, and to allow the intellectual and other contradictions to make of themselves what they liked. But the divorce between thought and feeling remained, and the influence of both on action remained undetermined. What was needed was a view which would bring together clearness of thought, intensity of feeling, and purity of action into one consistent whole, in which each would reinforce the other; in which emotion would kindle thought, and thought would give guidance and direction to emotion, and both inform the will, so that they might issue in right and consistent action. Man must be healed; the rupture in his nature must be bound up, and the harmony of a united life take the place of the discord made by each element of his nature rushing forth to the gratification of its own

immediate ends. Where is such a remedy to be found? The answer is in our text: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

In the first place, the love of Christ brought unity, harmony, and power to man, because it revealed to him the unity, harmony, and power of God. It revealed God to man as God had never been revealed before. For to the peoples of the earth the thought of the oneness of the living God was something new. There had been gods many and lords many, and the people were distracted with the thought of many gods and of a divided power and a discordant set of purposes. Even where they came to a thought of the unity of the Divine, that never attained to the feeling of a personal life and a living purpose. Then the gods had been national or racial beings, interested in the fortune of particular peoples, and having interests which were inconsistent with each other. Nor could it be said that the gods were perfect in character, or good in their purposes. They were thought of as caring only for themselves, as interfering with the affairs of men only out of caprice. Not merely in the popular belief was this so, but in philosophic delineations the view of the Divine nature was lacking because it never reached the goal of a personal life, and never attained to the certainty of a Divine meaning and a Divine purpose. But to such

peoples came the tidings of the love of Christ. These tidings came out of the fulness of the Old Testament revelation, with its news of the oneness of God, of His completeness and perfection, of the oneness of His purpose, of the universality of His rule, and of His justice, righteousness, and love. There was a harmony in the Divine life; in God were all ideals realised in their fulness. This was not a God careless of mankind, not limited in wisdom, love, or power. Above all, He was shown to be a God of character, who had a meaning of His own, and that meaning was being slowly set forth in His works and in His Word,

A harmony in the eternal world was thus the prelude to a demand for harmony in the life of man. But in the very heart of the new answer to the universal need was the revelation that the greatest, truest, most adequate of all conceptions was the thought of love. Here was no distant, remote God, removed by His very nature far from the needs, the desires, and the thoughts of men, careless of them and of their conduct, careful only to maintain order in the world. On the contrary, it revealed a God who cared for men, worked for them, loved them, and sought to make them such that He might dwell with them and give Himself to them. It told of the seeking, pursuing, toiling love of a God who would not let men

go, who was toiling for them in order to raise them to blessedness, and to the harmony of their own nature, and to the harmony of them with God and God's kingdom. It was something new for the peoples of the earth to be told of a living God who cared for men, who was thinking of them, working for them, following after them, bearing them as on eagle's wings, seeking to win their hearts and to make them worthy of His love.

But the story did not end with the revelation given in the Old Testament. With the New Testament came the crowning revelation of the harmony of God, and the greatest manifestation of His love. The new continuation of the story told of the seeking love of God taking a new form, making for itself a new manifestation. It told of that love for the world penetrating so deeply into the Divine nature, and moulding the Divine action so greatly, that the Son of God took on Himself the limitations of created existence, and became a Man subject to all human conditions. It told them that the Creator became a creature, that He lived on earth subject to human conditions, submitted to growth as creatures grow, lived as men live, and worked as other men work. How new it was when it came in its wondrous simplicity to these ancient peoples we can never fully know. For it has become so well known to us

that its wondrous character has been hidden by our familiarity with it. Yet it is as wonderful to-day as it was then. God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, God in Christ at work for the redemption of men, God in Christ toiling for men, living with them, suffering for men, dying for men, manifesting His love for them in such a way as to share their life and their death, and identifying Himself with them so completely as to be really one with them.

The Christian preachers told their story in all its simplicity, pathos, and power, and it broke the hearts of the people. Could the living God care so for the world? Could He take such an interest in the world as to take all that care and trouble for it? Could He so love the world as to give His only begotten Son for the world? The people listened with wonder; they heard and pondered over the wondrous news, and they believed the glad tidings, and responded to the wondrous love. If God could come in the likeness of man, if God could really live a human life on the earth, if like a slain man He allowed Himself to be slain, there could then be no doubt of God's love and care for men. Those who yielded to the gracious message found a new power, a new harmony, in their lives. They found in the constraining love of Christ, and in their own surrender to it, the way to enlist emotion into

the service of morality, to make their highest thought enter into their deepest feeling, and both to issue in action. So they found the lost harmony of their lives to be in process of restoration, and they became new men in Christ Jesus. A real conception of what God was, and of what the love of God meant, lay at the root of their new life and new power. And the conception of the unity and harmony of the Divine life was the prelude to the restoration of the unity and harmony of their own life.

But the love of Christ to them awakened a responsive love to Christ in their own life. Here we note what Dr. Chalmers has called "the expulsive power of a new affection." Readers of that sermon will remember how that great preacher dwelt on this profound thought. A new affection, just in proportion to its intensity and breadth, will give short shrift to all affections and desires which conflict with it. It will sweep them out of all places which come within the sphere of its operation. All that conflicts with the master affection will be destroyed, starved out, expelled. But there is another side to the character of a new affection.

It is not merely negative, it is positive. It is not merely an expulsive power, able to expel all that is opposed to it; it is an impulsive power, able to

gather into itself all the forces of the man, able to direct them to new ends, and to furnish them for a larger growth. On the one hand, it is the very nature of an affection to purify all the springs of human action which fall within its range. It is of the very nature of love to purify the life, so far as the object of that affection demands such a purification. A passionate attachment to any object commands all the powers of human nature, and moulds them to its service. So far, then, as the object of that passion is good, so far it will sanctify a man. A passionate attachment to wife and children will make it impossible for a man consciously to do anything inconsistent with their highest welfare. A patriot will never consent to do anything which would tend to injure his own country. So it is with all passionate attachments; they purify within their own range. But then, outside their own range they are powerless. A man devoted to his own household may not hesitate to do something inconsistent with the welfare of other households. Nay, in the interest of his own family he may not hesitate to injure the families of other people. A patriot devoted to the interests of his own country may, through the influence of that devotion, be the enemy of another country. For all these objects are finite, and the interests attached to them are not wide

enough to cover the whole life of man ; and while they purify and exalt human nature within the ranges ruled by them, they are not great enough to purify the whole life. What man needs for his complete purification is an object wide enough to cover all the interests of humanity, an object which in its very nature is as much opposed to all forms of evil and imperfection as patriotism is to treason, and love of family is to hostility to the interests of the family. Is there an object attachment to which would be hostile to every form of sin and evil ? The love of Christ is love to One who is altogether pure, holy, sinless, who is opposed to everything that partakes of sin, impurity, or selfishness. Once the responsive love to Christ enters into a man, it begins to expel all that is opposed to it ; and as the thought of Christ comes to be more and more adequate to the great reality, and as the love keeps pace with the thought, so the area of purification in the man's heart grows greater and greater, until the practices and tendencies opposed to Christ are expelled one after another, until the whole being is made subject to Christ.

The fact that passionate attachments to objects of a limited range purify within that sphere is of meaning in our present argument. As they purify within their own sphere, so the love of Christ purifies

within all the spheres of man's activity. For it is ever love, and only love, that purifies. It is only love that can sweep out of our life all the foul and evil things which have found themselves a place in it. But love to Christ, in whom is sphered all excellence, in whom all ideals meet and are realised, is contrary to all imperfection, to all evil, and to all sin. As it grows from more to more, so also grows the sphere of its rule. Thus the love of Christ is opposed to all forms of selfishness, evil, and sin. It has the expulsive power of affection. But this is not all. It has the mystic power of healing, sanctifying, developing the whole nature of man, so that he will be able to think truly, to feel deeply, and to act rightly. Emotion, thought, and action will move together in the unity of a ransomed life. Not only is every high thought brought down to the obedience of Christ, but the entrance of Christ into a man's life is the signal for the thinking of greater, truer thoughts than was possible for him before. He learns that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that there is room in Christ for the exercise of love in response to that love which passeth all understanding, and there is a call for action of that simple direct sort which follows in the steps of that unique Life which made no mistake, which had no room for regret, and never

failed to adapt means to real ends. Thus on the negative side the love of Christ gives no tolerance to untrue thoughts, unholy feelings, and unrighteous deeds; and on the positive side it draws out all the possibilities of a man, and all in harmonious union.

But it may be urged, this is the ideal and the goal of Christian life, and it is a ideal not often, or ever, realised in human life. Even if it were so, it would be well that such an ideal were held up before us as something to be aimed at, as something which in the days to come may be realised. It is wofully true that on all sides of his complex nature man comes sadly short of his ideal, and Christian men fall short of the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ. True it is that the reign of Christ does not extend to the whole nature of man, and Christian men are seldom Christian all through. It may be that they are not responsive intellectually to the demands of the truth as it is in Jesus, that they have not measured in any adequate way the majestic stature of the Son of God. They may have refused to think as He would have them to think, that the majesty of the truth which He is and which He teaches has never been seen by them. They may have lowered the conception of Him till it does not fairly represent Him at all. Yet if they have in some way thought about Him, if they have responded in some measure to His

revelation of the Father, then there is room for growth. He who has begun a good work will not leave it incomplete. Truth will win the victory, and through obedience to the truth their intelligence will grow. It may be true also that they have not seen the love of Christ in its tenderness, glory, and majesty. Nay, it is true that the highest and the best of Christian men have seen but little of the majesty of that love. There is a height and a depth, a length and a breadth in that love which passeth all understanding. But they have seen a little of that love, and they have known somewhat of its tenderness. And the response to it will also grow till it masters the whole man. It will issue in action as we gaze on the life of Him who wrought out the creed of creeds in loveliness of perfect deeds.

At present with most of us, or indeed with all of us, the constraining force of the love of Christ is not felt either in its expulsive or in its impulsive power. It has not cast out all the enemies of Christ, it has not expanded into the fulness of a Christ-like nature in us. Rather, it seems to exist often by a very precarious tenure. It may be likened to a conquered country over which the mastering armies have marched, but the people have not been subdued. Only within reach of the forts and strong places garrisoned by the invading power does their sovereignty

obtain. All beyond it there is no obedience. So it may be in many a man who has felt somewhat of the constraining power of the love of Christ. It may have won his intelligence, have touched his heart, and have influenced his action, at least in some degree. But there may be dark spaces within his soul into which the light that streams from the face of Jesus has never pierced. There may be emotions which have never been touched or transformed by the Spirit of Christ, there may be aims and purposes in his mind which are alien to the mind of Christ, and there may be actions which Christ can never approve of. All this may be true, and true it is in many cases, but the response to the constraining power of the love of Christ is progressive. It grows from day to day, as the great figure of Christ is more clearly seen, and the purpose of His mission is better understood. Day by day the lower nature is more strongly repressed, and the graces of the Spirit more strenuously cultivated. "We all with open face beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."

But in spite of the imperfect understanding of the person and purpose of Christ, notwithstanding the imperfect apprehension of His love and the poor response to it, wherever there is a response to that love, and wherever there is any apprehension of His

person, there is the healing power of Christ's presence at work, and some progress has been made towards the restoration of the harmony of man's nature, and towards the exercise of the power of self-control, and the mastery of the man over himself. The intelligence becomes keener and brighter, the emotions are widened and made stronger, the will is strengthened, and action, directed by the will towards obedience to Christ, becomes easier and swifter. Such is the teaching of Scripture, and such is the experience of men who have responded to the love of Christ.

So it must be, for the love of Christ tends to become in the hearts of those who surrender themselves to Him the overmastering passion of their lives. It is the characteristic mark of passion that it grows by what it feeds on. A passion directed towards an object urges the mind to brood over its object, causes it to dwell on it, till it fills the whole horizon of the mind. There are many illustrations of this striking fact in the psychology of our nature. If it be true, then, of various objects, finite in their nature and transient in their character, that they may become the objects of overmastering passion, what shall we say of the love of Christ? Passions of the nature described, directed to finite feeling objects, may harden the heart and sear the conscience; till, notwithstanding the fact that the higher elements of man's nature

fight against them they may overmaster the man. But there is also an object of desire which may be worthy of the most ardent passion, and may win the consent of the whole nature, and may enable the whole man to grow to his highest ideal when it has attained the object of its aim. Thus the response to the love of Christ ought to be intense and passionate, and ever more passionate as the mind broods on Christ, thinks of Him, dwells on all the aspects of His person and work, till it responds to Him in every fibre of its being. But the response to the attractive power of the love of Christ must proceed along all the lines of our being and action. He has redeemed us wholly, and He claims us through and through. And our response to Him must be thorough and complete, and our love to Him must be with all our heart, and with all our mind, with all our strength. In proportion as a man makes this great response to the love of Christ shall he grow to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man.

XVI

THE WISDOM WHICH IS RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION

“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—I COR. i. 30.

“IN Christ Jesus” is a phrase which often falls from the pen of the apostle, and which expresses the highest thought and the most intense emotion of the mind and heart of this great thinker. It occurs often, and in various relations, and it is apparently the key of his system. To be in Christ Jesus means, in short, for him the whole Christian position. All his doctrines are rooted in that conviction, and flow out of it. To be in Christ Jesus means no condemnation. It means to be in the family of God; it means to breathe the air of fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, in the Holy Ghost. In fact, all the life and thinking of the apostle may be read in the light of this fundamental thought; a thought which rules all his living and all his thinking.

The apostle further always insists that, as the Christian is in Christ Jesus, so he has been placed there by God the Father. Salvation is due always to the initiative of the Father. It is the Father who commends His love to us in the Gift of His Son; it is the Father who had that eternal purpose of love which is wrought out in this world of time; and from the Father the work of redemption, the stream of salvation, with all their meaning and outcome, have flowed. Emphatically in this text the apostle states the fact he so often states, that it is God who has placed these Corinthian believers in Christ Jesus. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." God has placed them there, and there they are to abide, to live and work, and to bring forth fruit. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

What is the meaning of being in Christ Jesus? All the breadth and fulness of that meaning who can tell? The apostle proceeds to tell that aspect of the meaning of being in Christ Jesus which bears on his present argument. He unfolds as much of that meaning as he needs at the present time and in the existing relation. Other aspects of that meaning he will unfold in other relations and in other circumstances, but to be in Christ Jesus means that one has won the wisdom which is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. If a man is in Christ Jesus, he must know this much, at least, that Christ Jesus is the

wisdom of God, and that in Him men can know the manifold wisdom of God. But the apostle has been speaking already of wisdom. He has had much to say of that word which was ever on the lips of the people of that time, which also the Corinthians themselves had often spoken, and of which perhaps they were proud. There was such a thing as a wisdom which the apostle said was not wise. For this wisdom had erred in many ways. It did not estimate rightly the values of things. It had not led men into a real knowledge of the highest things which ought to have interested men. Above all, and this is the heaviest charge brought against the wisdom of this world, it had not led men into the knowledge of the living God. The world by wisdom knew not God. Here the apostle is only repeating in his own way what his Master and ours had formerly said. In that intercessory prayer the Lord had said, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." The wisdom which does not lead to the highest and best knowledge of the highest and best objects is not true wisdom after all. So reasons the apostle. While he thus lays bare the defects of the wisdom of this world, and sets forth its inadequacy, its shortcomings, and its errors, he recognises that wisdom is still a good thing in itself and in its working. Man needs wisdom

and must seek it. It belongs to man as man to seek after wisdom, only he must seek the right kind of wisdom, and seek it in the right direction and in a right way. The world had erred in all these ways. Christ came to work a reversal of all human judgments. He put first what the world had put last, and last what the world had put first. He altered values, instituted new reckonings, proved that to be strong which the world had thought weak, and that to be weak which the world had thought to be strong. So in his own picturesque way the apostle sets forth this truth. After having done so, he recurs to the theme and utters the truth of the text. Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Wisdom is a good thing, and man needs it for the guidance of life, and man must have it. He finds it, as he finds all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in Christ Jesus. Apart from Christ, men can only have the wisdom of this world ; in Christ, they possess all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

According to the apostle, the blameworthiness of the world is that it followed a wrong way and came to a wrong conclusion. They might have had a wisdom which might have been both true and practical. They might have known God ; for, as he elsewhere says, "God had never left himself without witness." They might have known His eternal power and

Godhead, for these are manifested in the works of God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made and done, even his eternal power and Godhead." From these and many similar passages we gather the meaning of the apostle. There is a real wisdom, and men may know it if they seek it in the right way and by the right means. This wisdom leads to the true knowledge of God. It may be found in the works of God, and it may be found in the dealings of God with men, and above all it is found in Christ, and is the possession of those who are in Christ Jesus. For the apostle does not despise real and true wisdom, nor does he ever cast disdain on any real knowledge. Nor does he discourage research or science or philosophy, or any of those pursuits by which men seek to know the world in which they live, or themselves who live in it, or the Maker of the world, who made both them and the world, and placed them in relations to each other. But he emphatically says that the wisdom which does not reach forth to God, and which does not lead to God, is a wisdom which leads astray. For our highest thinking is vain if it does not include God in it, and our deepest science misleads if it has not God in it as the highest synthesis of its attempts to think things together. At all events, to the

apostle thinking is fruitless unless God is in it, and practical wisdom which has not in it the fear of God is sure to miss the mark.

But wisdom is needed by man, for without it life will be a failure. There is a true and real wisdom, and men may find it in Christ. To unfold this theme properly would be to write a treatise of great length. But we may indicate briefly how great was Paul's conception of the function of wisdom in the world and in the life of men. For he had no intention of disparaging wisdom. He would agree with James in saying that "the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Paul was a Jew, deeply read in the literature of his people, and he knew how largely the wisdom literature bulked in the literature of his people, and how great was the function ascribed to it by them. But for him the great office of wisdom in the world and in human life was now completed and fulfilled in Christ, who is the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God was Christ, and Paul proceeds to tell us that Christ became the wisdom of God, or was made the wisdom of God, to men. The functions of wisdom in the wisdom literature are now, for the apostle, discharged by Christ, and the Old Testament has received this fulfilment also in Christ.

Nor is this all ; for the apostle has seen the wisdom of God incarnated in Christ, and thus presented to men, so that men might learn real wisdom through Him, the wisdom which is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. We may see the apostle prostrate in adoration as he thinks of the wisdom of God, working out the eternal purpose of God in the making of the worlds which show forth His eternal power and Godhead, governing the world and causing it to move onwards to its appointed goal, and further, its demonstrating manifoldness to all by the great redemptive work of God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !" This is his attitude as he tries to trace the operation of the wisdom of God in eternity and through time, and he ever sees that wisdom at work. But this wisdom of God, which made the worlds, which rules them, and is making them a place in which God may dwell, is seen in its living, practical form in Christ Jesus. He is the wisdom of God, as He is the power of God. He is also the Father's Gift to the world, and He is made to man to be wisdom from God. But the most manifest and the most conspicuous illustration of the wisdom of God is found in them who are in Christ Jesus. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in

heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Thus he wrote to the Ephesian Church, and set forth what to him was the highest manifestation of the manifold wisdom of God.

Thus the apostle regards wisdom as indispensable for men. The people did not err when they sought after wisdom; they erred in that they sought it in the wrong place and in a wrong way. But since He has come who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, men may find wisdom, and every want indicated by the manifold nature of man may be supplied, whether it be the need of the intelligence, or the need of the heart, or the need of the will. For all true needs of the human family are met and supplied in Christ, and those who are in Christ Jesus find wisdom, and in that wisdom they find themselves, and are made complete, even to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ.

The wisdom of the world led to ignorance of God, to barrenness of life and fruitlessness of action. The wisdom from God which is in Christ, and is to them who are in Christ Jesus, is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Let us carry with us the main thought of the text, ere we look at its particular manifestations. Let us remember that it is of God that ye are in Christ Jesus. In His love and mercy He has placed us

there. Let us remember also that Christ Jesus is the Father's Gift to men, and that He is made wisdom from God, that in Him men may see God, in His wisdom, love, and power. Let us further remember that it is in Christ alone that men may find that wisdom from God which is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is only as we are in Christ Jesus that we can recognise the wisdom of God, and only as we recognise the wisdom of God that we obtain righteousness, attain to holiness, and find complete deliverance. While we trace the thought of the apostle and follow it out, let us never forget that these and all other blessings are ours only if we are in Christ Jesus. Christ is for us, Christ is in us, Christ is with us, when we are in Him, and not otherwise.

Righteousness is one of the primary needs of man. It is one of the spiritual necessities of the human spirit. To be in right relation to what is above us, to what is on a level with us, and to what is beneath us, to be in harmony with God and man and the world, is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. In some it grows to be a passion, a hunger and a thirst, and the higher a man rises in character and purpose the deeper becomes that longing, and the deeper the misery becomes when he knows that he cannot attain unto it. To be able to think truly and

in accordance with fact and law and order, to be able to act rightly and in accordance with all the rules of right action, to have our emotions always in correspondence with and in response to the true, the beautiful, and the good, and in aversion to the opposite of these, this would be righteousness. For this a man may hunger and thirst, and the better he is the more will he feel how far short of ideal righteousness his life and conduct are. While we realise that this is the ideal of righteousness, we realise also that it is unattainable for man. At best it is a far distant goal. But the apostle teaches us how righteousness is possible. Christ is made unto us righteousness. He is our justification, and is the ever-abiding cause of our remaining justified. We are in Christ Jesus.

It is not needful to set forth here the teaching of Scripture regarding Christ our righteousness. It is only necessary to remind us of the great grace of God whereby we are accounted righteous in His sight, only because Christ is our righteousness; nor need we recall here the magnificent reasoning and teaching of the apostle in his Epistles, specially in the Epistle to the Romans. But we may look at the appropriation of this righteousness, and lay stress on the faith which makes it ours. It is never to be forgotten that righteousness is given to us in order

that it may become ours. We feel unspeakable gratitude to the love which called us, to the grace which reckoned the sinner to be righteous, and to the mercy which pardoned us ; but these are a stimulus to us to labour in order that we may attain righteousness in all our life and conduct. We must never rest till we make our thinking true, our feeling pure, and our action right. We are reckoned to be righteous that, by the grace of God, we may become righteous. While righteousness and sanctification are distinguished in thought, and in the teaching of Scripture, let us never forget that they are really parts of one process, and are linked together in practical experience, as they are also in the teaching of Scripture. Christ is made to us righteousness, and He is also sanctification, and if we are in Christ the one leads on to the other.

Christ our sanctification. This also is a divine and gracious work, and it is the work of the Spirit of God, who worketh in us, and fashions us after the likeness of Christ. But I do not mean to dwell here on the Divine side of the work of sanctification, though I lay all stress on it in reality. I desire to lay stress on the other side of the process, which I fear is largely neglected by us all. For we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, even though we know that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do.

How is any work to be done? How are we to obtain the mastery over ourselves, to counteract weaknesses, to overcome defects, and to make our work effective and good? Work is done by thinking about it, reflecting on it, attending to it, recognising where it comes short of its ideal, and setting ourselves earnestly to try again, in the light of our discovery of our defects and of the causes of our failures. This rule is as wide as life, and applies to all the activities of man. It is so obvious that we almost forget it altogether. We may illustrate its action in this way. A young man has the accent and the pronunciation and the cadence of voice of the place where he is born and where he is brought up. He passes in the course of time to another place, where words are pronounced differently and where the stress of the sentences is differently laid, and he finds that his mode of speech is not in harmony with the ordinary form of English speech. How is he to bring his speech into harmony with the standard of the speech of the majority? Plainly there is no other way than that of recognising the differences, noting them, and thinking about them. Then, if he is wise, he will learn the current pronunciation, recognised by him as the standard of correct speech, then he will pronounce the word according to that standard, and he will repeat, and repeat, and repeat the correct

pronunciation, until he can speak it without effort. Indeed, the effort will now be to pronounce that word after the old fashion. So it is with any and every work of man. Whether it be the work of speaking, or of writing, or of work with the hand, there is only one way to do effective work. We must learn to think clearly, to recognise the ideal of the work in hand, see the end, and then think out the means by which the end is to be accomplished. Then we must attend to every detail of the process, until the detailed action becomes a linked habit, and we can perform every detail almost instinctively. That is the way by which men master their calling, and are able to do their work. They see the end, they devise the means, they set themselves into action, until action becomes easy, and then they are masters of their craft.

This work of sanctification is also work, and is to be accomplished as men accomplish their other work. Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit. Yes, but the Spirit sanctifies us by setting us to do our own work. It may be said that no work of man is done without God, for in Him we live and move and have our being. It is in virtue of the Divine power that men can think and will and act, and every act of ours is done because of the fact that we are kept by the power of God. So in the work of

sanctification, or of progressive growth in holiness, the Spirit works by setting men to work. The Spirit makes them think, and enables them to think. It sets before them the great ideal of real thought, the type of real and true living, the standard of perfect action, the great ideal of purity of heart. It discloses to them at the same time their defects, their shortcomings, their sins and their transgressions, and it enables them to ask how these are to be overcome. As in the case of a bad pronunciation, the man is made to recognise his defect, and is helped to see what ought to be, so in the case of sanctification the Spirit of God sets him to the task of mastering the right mode of action and of thought, and of overcoming the wrong and the bad kind of action. Are you disposed to sinful anger and are you subject to the rule of irrational passion? then the Spirit sets you to work along human lines of action, shows your defects, and enables you to overcome them. For, let me repeat, this work of overcoming defect can only be done by recognising the defect, by thinking about it, by watching how it arose, and then by taking steps to place a virtue and a strength where there were weakness and irresolution.

The main thing to be insisted on in this relation is that sanctification is not a process in which the subject is passive; it is not a work done on him—it

is a work done in him, and by himself, a work which calls forth all his powers into active appropriation of the great Ideal set before him, in the life of Him who left us an example that we should follow in His steps. We can do no work without Him, we can never attain to holiness without the Holy Spirit; but then in the work of sanctification every faculty and capacity of man is awakened to active life, and the man who is being sanctified is thinking about sanctification; his emotion is intense about it, his will is made strong, his conscience keen and sensitive, and he works as if he could do it all himself, being conscious that he can do this work only as the Spirit of God worketh in him. I fear that most men give but little thinking to their religious life; in it they are largely passive. Would that we could recognise that sanctification is work, active energetic work, work that needs and calls for all the powers of head and heart that we possess. Let us think about it, let us deepen our feeling and arouse our emotion by quickening in us the vision of the perfect life of Christ; let us strengthen our will to resist evil and do the good, and let us shape our action after the pattern set to us by Jesus Christ, so will we attain to His likeness and to the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

But wisdom is also redemption, and in Christ the

Christian has complete deliverance. It is the crowning word of this great climax. It reminds us of what an ancient Psalmist once sang: "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." So it is written in the 130th Psalm, and so the apostle writes, with a fuller meaning and with a clearer knowledge of the means of redemption than was possible to a Psalmist of the olden time. So he writes to the Ephesians, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace"; and to the Colossians, "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins"; and in many other places in similar terms. Thus one aspect of our redemption is the forgiveness of our sins, and Paul ever insists that Christ has delivered us from the guilt of sin by paying a ransom for us. The ransom is Christ Himself, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world. But this does not exhaust the meaning of redemption as it is conceived by the apostle, and as it is set forth in the New Testament generally. It means complete deliverance from sin, and from all the effects of sin. Sin shall have no more dominion over the man who is ransomed and redeemed. For redemption is the end and crown of our sanctification. All the

consequences of sin have been removed, and Christ will not be ashamed to call them brethren whom He has redeemed, when He shall present them to the Father, and say, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me."

Redemption means, then, complete deliverance from sin and all the effects of sin; but it has also a positive meaning. It means the attainment of righteousness, the winning of holiness; it means that Christ has made His people complete in Himself, and has wrought His own character into them, till they are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Redemption will be complete when we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Meanwhile there is for us the work of making our calling and election sure, the task of realising our deliverance from sin, the work of building up in ourselves a holy character, and thus day by day, slowly and painfully it may be but yet surely, realising Christ in us, so that we may grow more and more into His likeness, and thus find that we have obtained a complete redemption.

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